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Midsize luxury sedan features ultra-luxurious cabin and bold driving dynamics. **In Money**

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HBO documentary "The Man Will Burn" details perspective from Black attendees. **In Life**

British Open celebrates 5 decades of growth

Golfers look back on history of women's championship, a tournament that started with just five pros 50 years ago. **In Sports**

USA TODAY

THE NATION'S NEWS | $3 | WEDNESDAY, JULY 29, 2026

FROM LEFT: SHERRI STEINHAUER BY WARREN LITTLE/GETTY IMAGES; LAURA DAVIES BY ANDY BUCHANAN/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES; PATTY SHEEHAN BY SCOTT HALLERAN/GETTY IMAGES

'They're indeed great heroes'

Stories of 20 Americans killed in the Iran war

Chris Kenning and Ramon Padilla
USA TODAY

Mia Gonzales-Swinton stood on a Dover Air Force tarmac freighted with grief, keeping her 4-year-old daughter close in front of her.

She ran a finger through Aleia's hair.

Crisply dressed military honor guards carried four flag-covered transfer cases out of a cargo plane. President Donald Trump stood nearby. Another grieving family member could be heard crying. Gonzales-Swinton's daughter looked up at her mother.

"Is that my Dada in that box?" she asked.

Sgt. Michael Swinton, 30, Mia's husband, her fellow soldier who first dazzled her while they were both deployed in Bahrain, was dead. The man who liked to fish, fixed everything around the house and took on the bills so she could leave the Army to raise their children. The man who loved his wife and two kids most of all.

Swinton

"I still can't believe it's really him that's gone," she told USA TODAY.

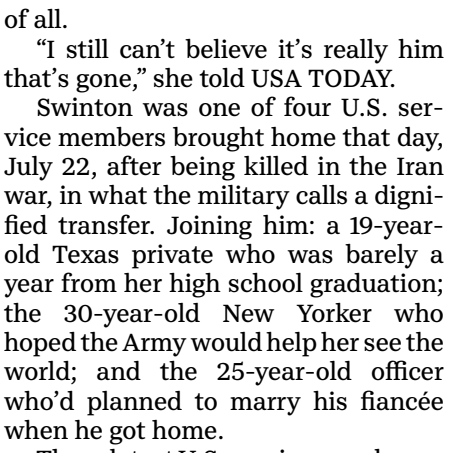
Swinton was one of four U.S. service members brought home that day, July 22, after being killed in the Iran war, in what the military calls a dignified transfer. Joining him: a 19-year-old Texas private who was barely a year from her high school graduation; the 30-year-old New Yorker who hoped the Army would help her see the world; and the 25-year-old officer who'd planned to marry his fiancée when he got home.

These latest U.S. service members – killed by hostile action, accident or unknown causes since hostilities with Iran began – bring the total to 20, according to military announcements. The Pentagon also lists more than 400 troops as wounded in action during Operation Epic Fury.

Trump launched attacks on Iran in February, saying the country was developing nuclear weapons. The war recently reignited after a ceasefire collapsed.

"They're indeed great heroes,"

See IRAN WAR TOLL, Page 4A



Servicemen carry the transfer case of Army Sgt. Michael Swinton, during a dignified transfer of his remains at Delaware's Dover Air Force Base on July 22. EVAN VUCCI/REUTERS

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Attendees pay their respects for Sen. Lindsey Graham at the U.S. Capitol on July 28. An emotional memorial service in the Capitol Rotunda left some relatives and lawmakers in tears. PHOTOS BY JACK GRUBER/USA TODAY

Graham honored

The longtime senator died July 11 of an aortic dissection. Services will take place over two days.

South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham, a central figure in the House and Senate for 31 years and a prominent voice in foreign policy, was memorialized July 28 in Washington, DC, as world leaders, colleagues and friends gathered to pay their respects. The Republican, 71, who died July 11, was remembered in an emotional ceremony at the Capitol Rotunda for his tenacity in public debate and his good humor. Funeral services will be held July 29 in South Carolina.

For more coverage of Graham's services, visit usatoday.com.

People changing jobs in construction have been outearning every other sector for almost three years, a new survey shows. BENJAMIN CHAMBERS/USA TODAY NETWORK

Construction workers dig it: Industry is No. 1 in pay boosts

Medora Lee
USA TODAY

When it comes to salary boosts, the "it" career of the year is construction.

Construction job-changers have outearned every sector every month since August 2023, except in February and March 2026, when pay for people who changed jobs in natural resources spiked temporarily, according to an analysis by human resources and payroll provider ADP of payroll transaction data. The analysis looked at more than 14.8 million employees over 12 months.

In June, year-over-year pay growth for people who changed jobs in construction was up 12.9%, outpacing every other industry. Median gross pay was more than $59,100, compared with $43,200 for all job-switchers that month, ADP said.

At a time when many Americans

See CONSTRUCTION, Page 2A

Is daylight saving time a problem for Judaism?

Some fear permanence would infringe on prayer

Marc Ramirez
USA TODAY

Each morning before work or school, Orthodox Jews recite the first of three daily prayers, whether alone or gathered at a synagogue in fellowship. Men don ritual shawls and leather prayer boxes, the time of the prayer dictated not by a clock but by the rising of the sun.

"The later the morning is, the later that prayers can be taking place," said Rabbi A.D. Motzen, national director of government affairs for Agudath Israel of America, an organization representing Orthodox Jews.

That's why many Orthodox Jews, he said, are concerned about the prospect of proposed legislation that would make daylight saving time permanent.

Introduced by Rep. Vern Buchanan, R-Florida, the Sunshine Protection Act of 2025 would institute permanent daylight saving time for most states, meaning the majority of Americans

See PRAYER, Page 2A

Construction

Continued from Page 1A

are struggling with and questioning the price of a college education, the analysis showed that specialized trades can also be lucrative.

"People who landed the biggest boost in pay so far this year were job changers in the construction industry, proving that investing in specialized trade skills can be another valuable gateway to making big bucks," wrote Nela Richardson, chief economist and head of ADP research. "Specialty trades are the 'it' career of the year when it comes to pay."

Why the rise in construction pay? It's not complicated

It's a simple story of supply and demand, ADP said.

Construction hiring has outpaced overall job growth since at least 2014. From 2014 to 2024, construction saw the strongest employment gains of any sector outside of the big trade, transportation and utilities category, which includes retail workers and truck drivers, Bureau of Labor Statistics data shows.

Even with those job gains, construction has still needed more workers, Richardson said. As a result, "with a limited labor pool, (construction) workers have the power to command big jumps in pay when they switch jobs."

Data center construction boom brings shortage of workers

A dearth of new entrants amid a data center boom has contributed to the construction worker shortfall, ADP said.

Older employees have carried the construction industry for years, ADP data shows. Since January 2020, the median age of electricians, plumbers, carpenters and HVAC professionals has fallen by as much as five years as the median age of U.S. employees has fallen only by one year. The drop in median age is because older people are leaving the profession, which puts more strain on the industry, ADP said.

"Investing in specialized trade skills can be another valuable gateway to making big bucks. Specialty trades are the 'it' career of the year when it comes to pay."

Nela Richardson
Chief economist and head of ADP research

Additionally, though data centers may account for less than 2% of the construction industry, those projects have a big "halo effect," boosting knock-on demand for residential and infrastructure labor, according to the American Institute of Architects. In May, the nonpartisan think tank Brookings estimated data centers contributed to an 11% increase in local construction jobs over five to six years.

What's next for construction workers?

The hiring boom for construction, along with its rising salaries, is likely to continue, and more apprenticeship and trade programs will emerge for people who want to enter the industry, ADP said.

"Construction workers are in high demand, with even private-sector companies outside of the industry creating apprenticeships and training programs to fill the talent gap," Richardson said. "There's early evidence that these efforts are luring new workers. The percentage of new hires in the construction industry – that is, people hired in the past three months – has been on the rise."

From 2019 to 2025, new hires accounted for 3.6% of employment, ADP data shows. So far this year, the share of new hires in the industry has grown by a full percentage point, to 4.6%.

Kentucky governor presses for verbal update on McConnell

Beshear's letter asks senator for transparency

Melina Khan
USA TODAY

Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear has issued a new plea for Sen. Mitch McConnell to give a verbal update on his condition six weeks after he was hospitalized for a fall.

In a July 27 letter to McConnell, Beshear called on the Kentucky Republican to "directly and verbally address the people of Kentucky and provide proof of your capacity to serve, or resign."

"It has now been 43 days since news of your hospitalization. During that time you have cast zero votes, engaged in no official activities, and aside from two photos and corresponding statements, have made no effort to communicate with your Kentucky constituents or the nation," Beshear wrote.

The Democratic governor also said he sent a copy of the letter to Sen. John Thune, R-South Dakota, to ask the Senate majority leader to investigate further if McConnell does not provide an update.

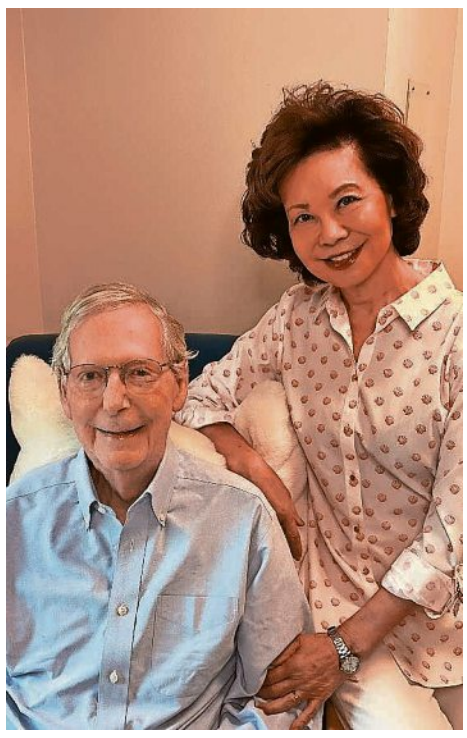
It came as McConnell's office released a new photo and briefing on his treatment, revealing that he is still undergoing "intense physical therapy" in a rehabilitation facility.

McConnell, 84, was hospitalized the morning of June 14 after experiencing a fall that left him briefly unconscious, his office said.

USA TODAY has contacted McConnell's office for comment on Beshear's letter.

Beshear asks McConnell to 'be honest'

On the latest update from McConnell's physician, Beshear contended it "does not discuss your actual condition, including whether you can speak, reason, or carry out your duties as a senator."



Officials released this photo, dated July 26, 2026, of Sen. Mitch McConnell, R-Kentucky, and his wife, Elaine Chao.
PROVIDED BY CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE OF THE ATTENDING PHYSICIAN

"I understand anyone's desire for privacy, but when you run for office and serve as one of a state's two U.S. senators, you willingly abdicate much of your personal privacy. That's the deal, and we all know it when we run," he wrote.

McConnell has faced bipartisan calls for transparency over the lack of information about his condition. Last week, Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez told reporters McConnell should provide an update on his health or resign.

Beshear also referenced "important events" happening on Capitol Hill in McConnell's absence. The senator has missed more than three dozen roll call votes in the Senate, including on key measures such as the annual defense policy bill and on ending the Iran war.

"Kentuckians are just asking you to be honest," Beshear said.

It's not the governor's first push for transparency amid McConnell's Senate absence. On July 8, Beshear similarly sent a letter to the senator asking for an update because constituents were "increasingly concerned about the current state of your health and wellbeing, and ability to hold office in the United States Senate."

McConnell's office issues update: 'Looking forward' to return

McConnell's office said in an update July 27 that doctors still have not medically cleared the senator to return to work or leave the rehabilitation facility where he is being treated.

"As always, I appreciate all of your continued well wishes, and I'm looking forward to getting back to the Senate and to Kentucky soon," McConnell said in the update.

The Office of the Attending Physician, which provides medical assistance to members of Congress, also released a statement in the update, saying doctors were visiting McConnell every day.

The lifelong effects of McConnell's bout with childhood polio continue to be a "significant factor in his mobility," the statement said.

"Since his discharge from hospital care, he has maintained a strenuous course of physical therapy and rehabilitation, including multiple sessions a day designed to rebuild strength and reduce the risk of future falls," the office said.

McConnell also released a new photo, dated July 26, of himself alongside his wife, Elaine Chao, as part of the update.

Contributing: Zachary Schermele

Prayer

Continued from Page 1A

would no longer have to "spring forward" or "fall back" – the twice-a-year task of adjusting their clocks, watches and other timepieces.

The legislation is currently before the U.S. Senate after being overwhelmingly passed by the House of Representatives, 308-117. It has the support of President Donald Trump, who has called seasonal clock changes "ridiculous."

Much of Jewish practice is tied to the calendar, and more specifically sunrise and sunset, said Rabbi Josh Joseph of the Orthodox Union, the country's largest Orthodox Jewish organization. Those events dictate morning and evening prayer times and the start and end times for Shabbat and holidays, he said.

"Many Jews gather each morning in synagogues for morning prayer," said Joseph, the organization's executive vice president and chief operating officer. "If sunrise is pushed back an hour, services can't begin until an hour later."

During winter months, he said, that would negatively affect the day's start for many, complicating efforts to get to work or school on time – particularly in the Midwest and mountain states, where sunrise in some places would be pushed well past 8 a.m. for long stretches, disrupting a fundamental religious practice of observant Jewish communities.

"The times for prayers and their accompanying rituals will be thrown into disarray – which, in turn, will put into jeopardy their proper fulfillment, discourage synagogue attendance, and result in late arrival for work," reads a letter sent by Agudath Israel to congressional offices. "Jewish religious and professional life will be deeply upended."

A chart compiled by the organization, which is urging senators to oppose or amend the bill, lists U.S. cities and how they would be affected by the law if passed.

"California is least affected, but go to Indiana or Michigan and the reality is harsher," Motzen said. "In most places where Orthodox Jews live, sunrise would be after 8 o'clock. In LA, it would only be 10 days a year – but in South Bend, Indiana, it's close to 150 days a year."

For 55 of those days, he said, sunlight wouldn't appear on South Bend's horizon until after 9 o'clock. In Helena, Montana, a post-9 a.m. sunrise would occur 50 days a year; in Boise, Idaho, 64; and in Bismarck, North Dakota, 75.

"This change would severely disrupt Jewish morning rituals, which require the arrival of natural dawn," wrote Rabbi Yosef Chaim Danziger of South Bend's Hebrew Orthodox Congregation in a letter opposing the legislation. "Such late sunrises would make the timing of prayer incompatible with the start of the typical school and workday, placing an undue burden on our many highly productive community members."

How morning prayer could be disrupted

Daylight saving time currently occurs from March to November, with most U.S. residents – except those in the states of Arizona and Hawaii, as well as territories like Guam and Puerto Rico, which don't observe it – moving their clocks forward an hour to prolong evening daylight. Passage of the Sunshine Protection Act would mean no longer setting clocks back during winter months to encompass more daylight in the morning.

Winter sunrises would happen later, producing darker mornings for swaths of the country. Supporters tout the benefit of later sunsets, allowing for more evening activities in addition to eliminating the twice-a-year task of changing clocks.

Opposition, however, has come from many parents who worry about the safety of children walking to school or waiting for a bus in the darkness of predawn mornings. Some health professionals and sleep organizations also caution that the change would conflict with the body's circadian rhythms.

For Orthodox Jews, who according to the Pew Research Center comprise nearly 1 in 10 Jews living in the United States, children's safety is likewise a concern. On average, Orthodox Jews have twice as many kids as non-Orthodox Jews, according to the center.

But such worries are compounded by the act's potential disruption of Shacharit, the set of morning prayers serving as a spiritual preparation for the day.

"Every individual is supposed to do morning prayer, but there are certain ones, those with great religious significance, that can only be said when there's a quorum," Motzen said.

Participating in communal morning prayers, which require a quorum of 10 men and can't start until shortly before sunrise, would have to be weighed against work and school obligations and commuting arrangements.

"A synagogue will struggle to gather 10 men, or it may mean that people wouldn't be able to start their jobs or open their businesses on time," Motzen said. "It would really disrupt the lives of many people."

Some may decide to forgo communal prayer and instead pray at their workplaces, he said, missing out on the benefits of fellowship and placing communal experiences at risk.

Similar worries trouble Muslim communities, whose mandatory morning recitations conclude precisely at dawn.

It's unclear whether the Senate will tackle the issue before it breaks for a five-week recess on Aug. 7. And maybe, Motzen suggests, summer isn't the best time to be voting on such things anyway.

"Nobody's thinking about cold winter mornings," he said. "They're thinking about an extra hour to play football or enjoy the sun on the beach. They're not thinking about going to school or waiting for a bus, and they're definitely not thinking about North Dakota."

Contributing: Zachary Schermele and Saman Shafiq

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Kohberger challenges conviction in Idaho student murder case

Thao Nguyen
USA TODAY

Bryan Kohberger, the man convicted of the murders of four Idaho college students in 2022, has filed a petition seeking to challenge his guilty plea and conviction, court records show.

Kohberger, 31, filed a "petition for post-conviction relief" July 27 in the Ada County District Court in Idaho. Such petitions allow defendants to challenge convictions after sentencing on grounds including ineffective assistance of counsel and other claimed legal or constitutional errors. Court records indicate Kohberger is representing himself.

Kohberger

Kohberger first publicly disclosed the petition in an interview with The New York Times, in which he claimed he was innocent and had been misled into confessing to the high-profile killings. He declined to discuss evidence supporting his claim of innocence or elaborate on his concerns about the plea process, according to The Times.

"Circumnavigated by a broken plea, the trial never provided the public the clarity conducive to closure, and justice shall remain abjectly miscarried unless that plea is withdrawn. ... My actual innocence is my truth, and the plea, hinged on by false promises and blatant disinformation, MUST be withdrawn," he said in a statement to the newspaper July 26.

Last year, Kohberger pleaded guilty to the murders of University of Idaho students Madison Mogen, 21, Kaylee Goncalves, 21, Xana Kernodle, 20, and Ethan Chapin, 20, at an off-campus home in Moscow, Idaho, in November 2022. He was sentenced to four life sentences without the possibility of parole and a 10-year sentence for burglary.

What happened in the 2022 Idaho killings?

Prosecutors said Kohberger broke into the victims' rental home near the University of Idaho campus and stabbed the four students to death on Nov. 13, 2022. The murders rocked the town of Moscow, setting the community on edge as investigators searched for weeks for a suspect before authorities arrested Kohberger on Dec. 30, 2022, in Pennsylvania.

Kohberger was linked to the crimes using DNA evidence found on a knife sheath near one of the victims' bodies, along with cell phone data and surveillance footage of his car's movements, according to prosecutors.

At the time of the killings, Kohberger was a doctoral student in criminal justice at nearby Washington State University. Police records reviewed by USA TODAY last year detailed a history of complaints about Kohberger's behavior at the university, including allegations he intimidated classmates and made female students feel "unsafe."

Kohberger struck a plea deal in July 2025 that divided the victims' families because it allowed him to avoid the death penalty and a high-profile trial.

Though Kohberger admitted responsibility for the killings during his plea hearing, he never publicly explained a motive. In his statement to The Times, he called investigators' account of the killings a "myopic narrative" and a "work of fiction," arguing that its "faulty premises were never challenged at trial."

Idaho victim's family criticizes Kohberger's innocence claims

In response to Kohberger's filing, Idaho Attorney General Raúl Labrador said his office "stands ready to do whatever is necessary to ensure justice is fully carried out."

"My heart goes out to the families of Madison, Kaylee, Xana, and Ethan, who have already endured unimaginable loss and now must face today's deeply painful news," Labrador said in a statement on X.

The Goncalves family also criticized The Times for giving Kohberger a platform to share his claims of innocence. In a statement July 27, the family described Kohberger as a "mosquito you just can't seem to swat."

Contributing: Christopher Cann, Jeanine Santucci and N'dea Yancey-Bragg

Comey seeks dismissal of seashells case, citing freedom of speech

Aysha Bagchi
USA TODAY

Former FBI Director James Comey is asking a federal judge to dismiss a controversial criminal case that accuses him of threatening to harm or kill President Donald Trump by posting an image of seashells on social media, calling the case an unconstitutional attempt to suppress his criticisms of the president.

The case centers on an image of seashells in the shape of "86 47," which Comey posted on social media in May 2025. "86" is slang for "to throw out" or "to get rid of," according to Merriam-Webster. Trump is the 47th president.

Comey deleted the post within hours, after some Trump supporters interpreted the post as a threat against the president. He said in a new post that he "didn't realize some folks associate those numbers with violence" and he opposes "violence of any kind." The Justice Department secured an indictment against Comey this past April, after Trump's former personal defense lawyer, Todd Blanche, became acting attorney general that month.

On July 27, Comey's legal team said in their plea for dismissal that, if the case against him is allowed to go forward, it would invite future prosecutions against other perceived political enemies who oppose the president.

"Forcing Mr. Comey to stand trial for a statement opposing the President – even if he is ultimately acquitted – would itself be an unconstitutional punishment of free speech," Comey's legal team wrote in his court filing.

A DOJ spokesperson highlighted in a statement to USA TODAY that the department secured the charges from a North Carolina federal grand jury. The spokesperson said Comey, like all defendants, would have his day in court, and it wouldn't be fair to the prosecution or to Comey for the DOJ to reveal further details on the case.

The case against Comey is the second brought by the DOJ since Trump publicly called for him to be prosecuted in September 2025.

The first case, which alleged that Comey lied to Congress, was dismissed in November, after a judge ruled that the prosecutor who secured the charges was unlawfully appointed. The DOJ has appealed that ruling.

The most recent charges against Comey have sparked widespread criticism, including from conservative legal voices who have argued that a successful prosecution would mean the government may criminalize a wide range of political speech.

Tensions between Trump and Comey go back years. In 2017, Trump fired Comey, who was director of the FBI. At the time, the bureau was investigating possible contacts between the 2016 Trump campaign and the Russian government. In the years after, Comey became a critic of the president.

In their July 27 filing, Comey's legal team wrote that "86 47" is a "well-known political slogan" expressing opposition to the president.

"In fact, thousands of items featuring this slogan have been sold on the internet and are available to this day, and the slogan was commonly displayed at protests around the country in the months preceding Mr. Comey's post," according to the court filing.

In 2022, conservative commentator Jack Posobiec posted "86 46" on social media, referring to President Joe Biden.

Asked on "CBS Mornings" in April whether the DOJ would pursue charges against Posobiec, Blanche said he had "no idea" whether that post was investigated, but that "you cannot compare, 'Well, what happened last time, what happened this time.' "

Sierra Club says century-old trees felled to make way for border wall

Michael Loria
USA TODAY

A group of trees believed to be more than 100 years old was felled July 27 at the U.S.-Mexico border to make way for President Donald Trump's border wall, local activists said.

The three cottonwood trees have stood at the border between the countries in Lochiel, Arizona, for more than a century, said Erick Meza, a border program coordinator in the state for the Sierra Club. The massive trees have long been a home for rare species and a shady place for neighbors to gather.

According to Meza, the trees were torn down over local objections, without environmental monitors and despite legally protected bird species nesting in the trees.

"This is a very unique situation because there is no other place in the entire border," Meza told USA TODAY. "The trees were so big that their branches were reaching into Mexico, and branches from the trees in Mexico were reaching into the United States, creating a connected ecosystem."

Department of Homeland Security officials did not respond to USA TODAY requests for comment. But in a June letter to Meza that he shared with USA TODAY, a border patrol official wrote that the trees would be removed because they cannot be relocated.

The fight over the Arizona cottonwoods is the latest in the pushback Trump's wall faces from border communities and environmentalists. The administration's move to build a barrier through some of the country's most remote yet ecologically unique places has sparked outrage even in deeply Republican Texas.

At least one person was arrested in connection with protests over the destruction of the Arizona cottonwoods, the Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office said. The person is charged with trespassing.

Sierra Club officials shared photos of bulldozers taking down the trees near the border. The trees can grow to 100 feet tall and nearly 50 feet wide.

A fourth cottonwood remains standing at the site surrounded by people protesting its destruction, Meza said.

Kate Scott drums at a foot of a cottonwood tree that was set to be torn down for border fence, in Lochiel, Arizona. REBECCA NOBLE/REUTERS

The Sierra Club is an environmental group formed by naturalist John Muir around the turn of the century. It has grown to become perhaps the nation's preeminent conservationist organization, fighting to keep the Grand Canyon from being flooded in the 1960s to protesting outside President Barack Obama's White House in 2011 to prevent the building of the Keystone XL Pipeline.

Why did DHS bulldoze the trees?

The trees were felled because they "cannot be relocated," Michelle "Shelly" Barnes, an official with U.S. Border Patrol, wrote in the June letter to Meza.

USA TODAY has reached out to Border Patrol for comment on the letter, which says the trees "fall within the Roosevelt Reservation and will be removed in order to construct the border barrier."

The Roosevelt Reservation is a 60-foot-wide stretch of land along parts of the border that the federal government established in the early 1900s in an effort to combat smuggling.

Locals opposed to the planned destruction of the cottonwoods say the cluster of trees has served as a gathering place for generations.

"It's kind of the heart of that little valley," Lochiel resident Laurie Butler told local news outlet AZPM in June when it became clear the cottonwoods were in the border wall path.

Rare ecosystem in the balance

The cottonwoods sit at the heart of an ecosystem that is home to jaguars, rare species of birds and other wildlife.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service lists the area as among the only jaguar ranges in the country.

Trump seeks help on mail-ins

He appeals to Supreme Court on ballot rules

Maureen Groppe
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON – The Trump administration on July 27 asked the Supreme Court to let President Donald Trump tighten rules nationwide for mail-in ballots before this fall's midterm elections as he seeks to exert more federal control over voting.

Trump filed the emergency appeal after lower courts blocked the administration from creating a federal list of eligible voters and limiting delivery of mail ballots only to people on that list in nearly half the states.

In June, a federal judge in Boston said key parts of an executive order Trump signed in March were unconstitutional, ruling that those components can't be enforced this year in the 23 states that are challenging the order.

In July, an appeals court rejected the administration's argument that the states' lawsuit was premature because the executive order has not been fully implemented.

The Boston-based 1st U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals said the changes are already straining states and "would sow confusion and threaten disenfranchisement of many eligible voters" if allowed to go into effect for the November elections.

But the Justice Department told the Supreme Court that pausing Trump's executive order is "especially indefensible because the agencies are still deliberating over how (if at all) to implement the Order."

The lower court "preemptively decided that whatever the agencies may choose to do will necessarily be unlawful," the government's lawyers wrote.

The Supreme Court asked the states challenging the order to respond to the administration's appeal by Aug. 3.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-New York, said Trump's executive order is "nothing other than voter suppression by another name." He said the court "must reject this latest, brazen attempted power grab."

Mailed ballots key fight before consequential midterms

The fight over rules for absentee ballots is a key battleground in the 2026 midterms that will determine which party controls Congress. Democrats can take control by flipping a handful of seats in the House and Senate.

Voting by mail has decreased since its peak during the COVID-19 pandemic. But nearly 30% of voters still cast a ballot that way in the 2024 elections.

Democrats are more likely than Republicans to vote by mail.

Trump, who has voted by mail himself, contends absentee ballots are often fraudulent. He directed the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to compile lists of confirmed U.S. citizens eligible to vote for states to consult.

The U.S. Postal Service was ordered to only deliver ballots to voters on each state's approved mail-in ballot list.

The Justice Department must prioritize investigating and prosecuting state and local election officials who give federal ballots to anyone deemed ineligible to vote.

States administer federal elections

The appeals court said Trump's executive order "directs unprecedented levels of involvement by federal officials in how states administer elections."

Under the Constitution, states are assigned the role of administering federal elections. But Trump has called for greater federal control since losing his 2020 reelection bid. He has continued to push the false claim that he lost because of widespread voter fraud.

Trump has proposed legislation to require voters to provide identification at the polls and proof of citizenship when registering as part of a broader bill, which has stalled in Congress.

In addition, judges have blocked a different executive order that would have required potential voters present documentation proving their citizenship in order to register to vote.

Transfer cases are secured July 22 in a transport van during a dignified transfer of remains at Delaware's Dover Air Force Base. EVAN VUCCI/REUTERS

Iran war toll

Continued from Page 1A

Trump said of the deceased soldiers while talking to reporters before heading to Dover. "All of them said, very strongly, that we can't let Iran have a nuclear weapon, so we're going to honor them."

Read their stories below:

Master Sgt. Nicole M. Amor

Master Sgt. Nicole M. Amor, 39, had deployed to the Middle East before.

Amor

The White Bear Lake, Minnesota, resident joined the National Guard in 2005 as an automated logistics specialist, overseeing troop supplies. She transferred to the Army Reserve in 2006. She served in Kuwait and Iraq in 2019.

In her latest deployment to Kuwait, she was assigned to the 103rd Sustainment Command, which provides food, fuel, water, ammunition, transport equipment and other supplies.

The mother of two was just days away from returning home when she was killed in a drone strike at a U.S. base in Kuwait, her husband, Joey Amor, told The Associated Press. Nicole Amor enjoyed rollerblading and cycling with her fourth grade daughter.

"She was almost home," he said. "You don't go to Kuwait thinking something's going to happen, and for her to be one of the first – it hurts."

She talked to her husband not long before the attack, he told the AP. "She just never responded in the morning," he said.

Capt. Curtis J. Angst

Capt. Curtis J. Angst, 30, of Wilmington, Ohio, initially enlisted in the Ohio Air National Guard in 2015 as a vehicle maintenance technician.

Angst

But he pivoted to an aviation career by earning an aerospace engineering degree from the University of Cincinnati, becoming an officer and going on to serve as a KC-135 Stratotanker pilot.

Angst was a pilot in the 166th Air Refueling Squadron, which is connected to the 121st Air Refueling Wing, based out of Rickenbacker Air National Guard Base in Columbus. He was responsible for flying around the world on refueling missions as well as medical and cargo missions, reported The Columbus Dispatch, part of the USA TODAY Network.

He died when a KC-135 refueling plane crashed in friendly airspace, over western Iraq, on March 12, killing six people.

U.S. Central Command confirmed that the accident was not caused by hostile or friendly fire during Operation Epic Fury. The crash came after a possible mishap between two similar Boeing KC-135 Stratotankers, the second of which landed safely, Defense One reported.

Angst's family described the Wilmington native as living a life "defined by service, generosity and a genuine love for people," they wrote in a statement March 15 on social media, three days after the crash.

When he wasn't on duty, he loved traveling, the outdoors and music. He is survived by his wife, Mary.

"Those who knew Curtis remember his steady kindness and the joy he carried with him everywhere he went. He was always ready to help someone else before himself. His constant smile and instantly recognizable laugh made people feel welcome, valued, and part of something bigger," his obituary said.

Sgt. Declan J. Coady

Sgt. Declan J. Coady's parents learned, while at home on a Sunday night in Iowa, that their son had died in the same March 1 strike that killed Sgt. Nicole Amor.

Coady

The soldier's father, Andrew, told The Des Moines Register that Coady had last spoken to him a day earlier from his base in Kuwait.

"He was telling us that he was safe," he said.

Coady, 20, a sophomore at Drake University and an Army reservist from West Des Moines had joined the Army Reserve while in college.

Declan loved gaming, going to the gym and the family cat, Autumn. He enjoyed camping and hiking with his family. He had served in the Army Reserve since 2023 as an information technologies specialist.

He could have been exempt from deployment because he was in ROTC but accepted deployment to Kuwait in August 2025, his father said.

"That's how much he loved it," Andrew Coady said.

A GoFundMe from his family called him "more than a soldier – he was a son, a family member, a friend, and a light in the lives of those who knew him. He served his country with honor, courage, and dedication, embodying the very best of what it means to wear the uniform."

Maj. Sorffly Davius

Maj. Sorffly Davius, 46, joined the Air Force in 2004 and transferred to the New York National Guard in 2013. He previously served in Kuwait in October 2010.

Davius

In civilian life, Davius, who lived in Queens in New York City, was a member of the New York Police Department, joining the force in 2014, according to the New York National Guard.

Davius was assigned to battalion headquarters of the 42nd Infantry Division, which deployed to Kuwait in summer 2025, serving as a data systems engineering officer in the division headquarters, responsible for computer and communications network security.

He died on March 6 of undetermined but noncombat causes while stationed at Camp Buehring in Kuwait, the Guard said. The New York Police Department said in a social media post that he died as a result of a medical episode.

He is survived by his wife and six children.

"His career was defined by service – to his country and to New York City," New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani and Police Commissioner Jessica Tisch wrote in a joint statement, according to WTEN-TV.

Cmdr. Gabriel Edwards

Cmdr. Gabriel Edwards was declared to have died July 1 after his helicopter ditched in the Arabian Sea.

Edwards

While three other sailors were rescued, the Navy called off the search for Edwards after four days, the U.S. Naval Institute reported.

Edwards, a native of Oakland, Oregon, had commanded the "Nightdippers" helicopter squadron since July 2025.

"We mourn the loss of Commander Gabe Edwards – a naval aviator commanding officer of Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 5, and a leader who strengthened our fleet and inspired those he led," acting Secretary of the Navy Hung Cao wrote in a social media post.

Edwards began as a helicopter pilot in 2008 and previously served in several helicopter sea combat squadrons. He also served as part of Naval Special Warfare Group 4, according to the institute.

He is survived by his wife, Rebecca, and two children. In an interview with his mother, KGW-TV reported his age to be 42.

"To those who served alongside him, he was a respected leader and mentor. To our family, he is the love of my life, an extraordinary father to his children and the foundation of our home. His greatest joy was always his family," Rebecca Edwards said in the Navy release.

1st Lt. Tyler James Feehan

Army Lt. Tyler James Feehan's mother, Shari Feehan, and her Army veteran husband couldn't wait for their adventurous 25-year-old son, who they called "Tivo," to finish his military deployment in Jordan.

Feehan

He was close to earning a master's degree in business and had plans to attend law school. But first he planned to wed his fiancée, the love of his life, in Italy, his mother told USA TODAY.

She said his deployment, initially scheduled to end around July 17, was extended amid the Iran war. He died on July 18, she said, after an Iranian missile and drone attack on the Muwaffaq Salti Air Base in Jordan.

"Our hearts are shattered," Feehan said in a text message, adding that she was proud of her son's service.

Tyler Feehan's father, Stephen, served 26 years in the military – and his son followed.

He first enlisted in the Army in 2019 as a combat engineer from his then-home of Ewa Beach, Hawaii, according to the Army's statement.

Feehan completed Southern Utah University's ROTC military training program in spring 2024. He was assigned to an element of the 32nd Army Air and Missile Defense Command and was based at Fort Bragg, which is located in Fayetteville, North Carolina, according to the Pentagon release.

"In just 25 years, Tyler packed in more living than most people manage in a lifetime. He chased adventure relentlessly, whether it meant reaching Everest Base Camp or walking the Camino de Santiago across France and into Spain," Shari and Stephen Feehan wrote in a message to USA TODAY.

He also loved mentoring soldiers, sharing his love of finance and pushing the value of education every chance he got, they said. His parents said they are starting a scholarship in his name.

"We ask only this: that in remembering Tyler, people pause to see the good this country still holds, rather than what divides it," they said.

Pvt. Isabella Gonzales

Pvt. Isabella Gonzales was known as "Isa" to some of her Carrollton, Texas, high school friends, who shared photos of her laughing and posing at dances and bowling alleys.

Gonzales

She was proud to join the military, as you can see from the U.S. Army stole she wore atop her blue graduation gown from Hebron High, just north of Dallas.

"After graduating from Hebron just last spring, she answered the call to serve in the United States Army. She gave her life in that service, and our district is heartbroken by her loss," the Lewisville Independent School District said in a statement.

She was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 57th Air Defense Artillery Regiment, 10th Army Air Missile Defense Command at Ansbach, Germany, according to the Pentagon.

Deployed at Muwaffaq Salti Air Base in Jordan amid the Iran war, she was one of those killed during the July 17 Iranian attack.

"We're all really shocked because she was so young," her friend Valerie Rodriguez told WFAA-TV. "I never thought this would happen to her. Never in a million years."

Texas Gov. Gregg Abbott praised her courage and sacrifice, noting in a statement that she was "just 19 years old."

Continued on next page

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Capt. Cody A. Khork

Capt. Cody A. Khork was drawn to the military at a young age and spent more than 15 years in the service.

Khork

Khork, 35, of Winter Haven, Florida, enlisted in the National Guard in 2009 as a fire direction specialist, helping direct artillery, according to the Pentagon.

In 2014, he became a military police officer in the Army Reserve. Over the years, he deployed to Saudi Arabia; Guantanamo Bay, Cuba; and Poland.

He was among those killed in the March 1 Iranian attack in Kuwait.

Khork enlisted in the Army Reserve and joined Florida Southern College's ROTC program, his family wrote in a statement. He loved history and had a degree in political science.

"That commitment helped shape the course of his life and reflected the deep sense of duty that was always at the core of who he was," his mother, Donna Burhans, father, James Khork, and stepmother, Stacey Khork, wrote in the statement.

They described him as "the life of the party, known for his infectious spirit, generous heart, and deep care for those who served alongside him and for everyone blessed to know him."

His family said he had also "found the love of his life."

Maj. John "Alex" Klinner

Maj. John "Alex" Klinner, 33, was among the crew who died on March 12 when a KC-135 refueling plane crashed.

Klinner

The Air Force pilot and Auburn graduate leaves behind his wife and three young children – 7-month-old twins and a 2-year-old son, according to the Montgomery (Alabama) Advertiser, part of the USA TODAY Network.

Friends and family described Klinner as an outdoorsman who was always willing to lend a hand to others.

Klinner was one of three service members killed in the crash assigned to the 6th Air Refueling Wing at MacDill Air Force Base. Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey said the airman was stationed in Birmingham.

Capt. Seth R. Koval

Capt. Seth R. Koval, 38, of Stoutsville, Ohio, was also aboard the air tanker that crashed March 12.

Koval

Koval was a KC-135 instructor pilot assigned to the 166th Air Refueling Squadron, 121st Air Refueling Wing, at Rickenbacker Air National Guard Base in Columbus, Ohio.

"Seth was one of the most generous and kind men we have ever met. He was the ultimate husband and dad. Both his wife and son adored him, and he loved them both so well," according to a fundraiser for the family.

Koval's military career began in 2006 when he enlisted as a machinist with the 122nd Fighter Wing of the Indiana Air National Guard. After graduating from Purdue University in 2011 with a bachelor's degree in aviation operations, he transferred to the Ohio Air National Guard in 2017.

He was commissioned through the 121st Air Refueling Wing in 2018, and was deployed in 2014, 2020, 2022, 2023 and 2026, logging 443 combat hours, according to the Ohio Adjutant General's Department.

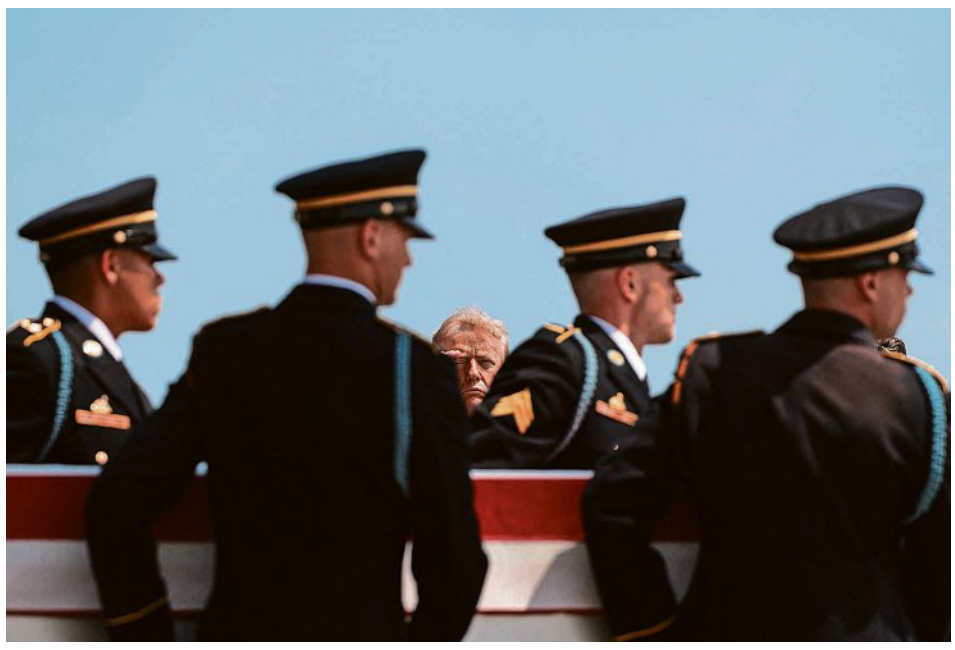
Chief Warrant Officer 3 Robert Marzan

Chief Warrant Officer 3 Robert Marzan, 54, of Spotsylvania, Virginia, was assigned to the 103rd Sustainment Command based in Des Moines, Iowa, when he was killed in Kuwait at the Port of Shuaiba, during an unmanned aircraft system attack, according to the Army Reserve.

Marzan

He first enlisted in the Army in 1990 in Sacramento, California, then transferred to the Army Reserve in 1994, becoming a data operations warrant officer in 2011. He served in Croatia and Bosnia in 1996 and Egypt and Kuwait from 2019 to 2020.

"We honor our fallen Heroes, who served fearlessly and selflessly in defense of our nation. Their sacrifice, and the sacrifices of their families, will never be forgotten," Lt. Gen. Robert Harter, Chief of Army Reserve and Commanding General U.S. Army Reserve Command, wrote in a statement.


President Donald Trump, center, salutes as members of the military carry the transfer case of Army Sgt. Angel S. Rampersad in Dover, Delaware. She is believed to have been killed in a July 17 enemy attack. EVELYN HOCKSTEIN/REUTERS

Shortly after the Pentagon's announcement of the deaths, California Gov. Gavin Newsom called him "a courageous Californian whose service to our nation was marked by honor and distinction."

Maj. Jeffrey R. O'Brien

Maj. Jeffrey R. O'Brien, 45, a resident of Waukee, Iowa, became a Signal Corps officer in the Army Reserve in 2012, the military said. He was assigned to the 103rd Sustainment Command and died in the March 1 attack in Port Shuaiba, Kuwait.

O'Brien

Mary Melchert, O'Brien's aunt, posted on Facebook that he studied computer engineering in college and had been in the Army Reserve for 17 years.

"He leaves behind a wife and three kids. War is real ... loss is real ... he was the sweetest blue-eyed, blonde farm kid you'd ever know. He is so missed already," she wrote.

O'Brien had previously deployed to Kuwait in 2019, military authorities said.

Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds honored him and another Iowa soldier killed in the war.

"On behalf of a grateful state, Kevin and I offer our prayers and condolences for their families, and we ask all Iowans to stand united in support of our fallen soldiers and those who loved them," she said.

Staff Sgt. Benjamin Pennington

Sgt. Benjamin Pennington, 26, was named by the Pentagon as the seventh U.S. service member killed in the Iran war.

Pennington

Pennington, a native of Glendale, Kentucky, died of his injuries after an Iranian attack on Prince Sultan Air Base in Saudi Arabia on March 1, according to U.S. military officials. He was assigned to the 1st Space Battalion based in Fort Carson, Colorado.

"Sgt. Pennington was a dedicated and experienced noncommissioned officer who led with strength, professionalism and sense of duty," Col. Michael F. Dyer, 1st Space Brigade commander, said in a statement.

Pennington enlisted in the U.S. Army as a unit supply specialist in 2017, joining the 1st Space Brigade, part of the U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command, in 2025. He was posthumously promoted to staff sergeant.

Pennington was "a hero who sacrificed everything" serving the country, Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear wrote in a social media post. "Please join Britainy and me as we pray for his family and our fellow Kentuckians during this difficult time."

Tech Sgt. Ashley B. Pruitt

Sgt. Ashley B. Pruitt, 34, of Bardstown, Kentucky, was among the six service members killed aboard a KC-135 refueling plane.

Pruitt

She joined the ROTC at the University of Louisville and enlisted in the Air Force in 2017, serving as a boom operator, according to her obituary. She was assigned to the 6th Air Refueling Wing at MacDill Air Force Base in Florida.

Her job meant overseeing aircrew readiness, training and flight operations while instructing boom operators on air refueling procedures, the Air Force said.

Pruitt "was widely regarded as fierce, a true force of nature, and radiant – someone who could light up any room she entered. Her determination, paired with a genuine sincerity in how she carried herself, earned her trust and respect far beyond her rank," her obituary read.

She is survived by her husband, Greg Pruitt, along with a daughter and stepson.

Kentucky U.S. Rep. Brett Guthrie said on social media: "Our Commonwealth is forever grateful for the sacrifice of Tech. Sgt. Pruitt. Beth and I are praying for her family and loved ones."

Sgt. Angel S. Rampersad

Sgt. Angel S. Rampersad, 28, of Ozone Park, New York, previously named as missing, is now believed to have been killed July 17 during an enemy attack at Muwaffaq Salti Air Base, the Pentagon said.

Rampersad

She was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 57th Air Defense Artillery Regiment, 52nd Air Defense Artillery Brigade, 10th Army Air and Missile Defense Command, based in Ansbach, Germany.

New York Gov. Kathy Hochul posted on X that New York was mourning "the loss of one of our own."

Logan Thomson, 30, who previously served with Rampersad in Hawaii, told the New York Post that she was charismatic, adventurous and saw the Army as a way to see the world.

"I keep just replaying in my own head what she went through in the last moments, and it just tears me apart every time because it's something I just know she did not deserve," Thomson said.

Maj. Ariana Savino

Maj. Ariana Savino was the chief of current operations pilot at the 99th Air Refueling Squadron at the Sumpter Smith Joint National Guard Base in Birmingham, Alabama.

Savino

Savino, 31, of Covington, Washington, earned her active-duty commission in 2017 through the Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps from Central Washington University.

In 2020, she graduated as a combat systems officer, later served as a flight commander and became a KC-135 pilot, according to MacDill Air Force Base.

Savino flew 348 combat hours in both the E-8C Joint Surveillance Target Attack Radar System as a combat systems operator and the KC-135 Stratotanker as a pilot.

She was aboard the refueling plane that crashed March 12.

"She was a dependable leader who knew how to look out for her fellow Airmen; a dedicated friend; devoted sister and best friend to Kelaia and Zevin, and loving mom to her dogs, Zoey and Piper, who were her whole world," said a fundraiser to help her family and to establish a scholarship fund supporting Latina women in aviation.

Savino's last message to her friend several days before her death was "WEPAAAA," a joyful Puerto Rican exclamation, retired Air Force Lt. Col. Ernesto Nisperos wrote in a statement to The Seattle Times.

Sgt. Devin Seibel

Sgt. Devin Seibel, 26, of Robinson, Texas, died on May 31 at Erbil Air Base, Iraq, during a training-related incident, according to the Pentagon.

Seibel

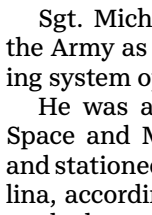
Seibel was a combat medic assigned to the Air Ambulance Company, 2nd Battalion, 4th Combat Aviation Brigade, Fort Carson, Colorado. A British soldier, Lance Cpl. James Freeman, also died in what the British military called a "tragic accident during routine military training activity."

Seibel enlisted in May 2017 and previously completed a deployment to Afghanistan from 2020 to 2021, according to the Military Times.

"Colorado expresses our deep gratitude to Sergeant Devin Seibel for his dedicated service to the security and safety of our nation. Our prayers go to the Seibel family in Colorado Springs, and Devin's brothers and sisters in service," Colorado Gov. Jared Polis said in a statement.

Master Sgt. Tyler H. Simmons

Master Sgt. Tyler H. Simmons, 28, was a boom operator and a member of the 166th Air Refueling Squadron at Rickenbacker Air National Guard Base, according to the US Air Force.


Simmons

Boom operators are those who direct the transfer of fuel from the KC-135 fuel tanker to other aircraft mid-flight.

The Columbus, Ohio, native knew as a boy that he wanted to be a pilot, according to The Columbus Dispatch.

"I'm like, 'Tyler, are you sure you want to do that?'" his cousin Edward Dudley Jr. said. "He said, 'The thing is, I'm fighting for my country. I'm getting paid to do it. I'm getting paid to fight, I'm getting paid to fly.'"

Simmons enlisted in 2017. He logged 230 combat hours in three deployments, and he participated in operations Freedom Sentinel, Spartan Shield, Inherent Resolve, Deliberate Resolve and Epic Fury. Simmons had 779 flight hours and was assigned to the KC-135 refueling plane.

Simmons loved Flamin' Hot Cheetos, skating, Spider-Man and playing "Call of Duty," his friends and colleagues said – describing him as a jokester who loved his dog Grayson and his family.

Sgt. Michael E. Swinton

Sgt. Michael E. Swinton, 30, joined the Army as an air defense early warning system operator in 2017.

He was assigned to the U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command and stationed at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, according to the military. He later worked as a Patriot fire control enhanced operator. He had a wife and two children, his family said.

"Sgt. Swinton was an experienced noncommissioned officer who took great pride in his work and the people around him," said Brig. Gen. John L. Dawber, 32nd AAMDC commanding general.

The Pentagon said he was killed during a controlled detonation of a downed drone on July 19 at a U.S. base in Erbil, Iraq. The city is roughly 100 miles west of the Iranian border.

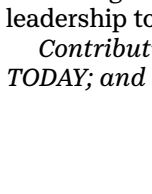
Swinton's mother, Christel Swinton Andujar, told USA TODAY in a statement that her son had "a contagious laugh and a sense of humor that brought laughter to others.

"Michael's greatest love was his family. His wife, Mia, and two beautiful children, were the center of his world," she said.

His wife, Jamiah "Mia" Gonzalez-Swinton, called him "an amazing man and an exceptional leader" and an "incredible husband and father who cared deeply for everyone around him," according to her online fundraiser meant to help with family expenses.

Master Sgt. Noah L. Tietjens

Noah L. Tietjens, 42, a resident of Bellevue, Nebraska, enlisted in the Army Reserve in 2006 as a mechanic.


Tietjens

He'd previously deployed to Kuwait in 2009 and 2019, earning decorations that include an Iraq Campaign Medal with Campaign Star and an Overseas Service Ribbon.

He was also among six troops killed when an Iranian strike hit the Port of Shuaiba in Kuwait.

"Just to let everyone know our son Noah Tietjens was killed in Kuwait yesterday," Glenda Wetzel Tietjens posted on Facebook. "We just ask for some time to wrap our heads around all of this."

A GoFundMe campaign said his death left behind "his devoted wife and his incredible son, Dylan. Noah was a man of courage, discipline, and unwavering love for his family. He lived and served with honor, and he led his life with strength, integrity, and quiet leadership. Above all, he was a deeply committed husband and father. Dylan was his greatest pride."

In Nebraska, the owners of Martial Arts International posted online that Tietjens was known at the gym as "Mr. Noah, a devoted husband and father, a respected Black Belt in Philippine Combatives and Taekwondo, and an instructor who gave his time, discipline, and leadership to others."

Contributing: Erin Mansfield, USA TODAY; and USA TODAY Network staff

Supreme Court to weigh rules on weapons

Semi-automatic rifles are put in historic context

Maureen Groppe
USA TODAY

An employee holds an AR-15, a semi-automatic .22 caliber rifle, at Pewnitions Factory in Salem, Oregon, in 2025. KEVIN NERI/USA TODAY NETWORK

WASHINGTON – Gun regulations were a big focus of the Supreme Court this year. In the coming Supreme Court season, the issue will again be in the cross hairs.

This time, the focus will be on semi-automatic rifles including AR-15s.

Modern gun rules, the Supreme Court said in a landmark 2022 decision, can't stray too far from historical weapons regulations to pass constitutional muster.

While the Supreme Court appeared to pull back from that controversial test just two years later, two Second Amendment decisions the conservative court handed down in June show it's firmly in place – which could have implications for the coming showdown over semiautomatic rifles.

This year, the Supreme Court struck down Hawaii's attempt to limit where guns can be carried in public. It also ruled, in a unanimous decision, that a law blocking regular drug users from having a gun was too broad. In both cases, a majority on the Supreme Court said neither restriction could be supported by laws dating to the 1700s and 1800s.

"It looked like the court was going to accept relatively loose analogies in applying the Second Amendment to current gun laws," said Adam Winkler, a UCLA School of Law professor and author of "Gunfight: The Battle Over the Right to Bear Arms in America." He added, "But that doesn't seem to be the case anymore."

In the 2022 decision, the Supreme Court said a gun regulation must be "consistent with this nation's historical tradition of firearm regulation."

A `9-0 smackdown'

A major test of that approach is coming this fall, when the Supreme Court will debate whether state and local governments can ban possession of semiautomatic rifles such as AR-15s as a response to mass shootings.

Aidan Johnston, director of federal affairs for Gun Owners of America, is optimistic that the court's 2024 decision upholding a law banning domestic abusers from owning guns, in a case called United States v. Rahimi, was an aberration.

"I do think maybe things looked bleaker for gun rights activists after Rahimi and things look a lot better when you see a 9-0 smackdown," Johnston said of the court's recent unanimous ruling against a broad federal ban on gun ownership by marijuana users.

The court's three liberal justices joined that opinion despite Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson's complaints that the historical tradition test is "unworkable" and should be scrapped.

Gun violence prevention groups are likewise critical of the test but still see signs that it can be used to address modern-day realities.

Nothing in the recent decisions undermines the court's previous rulings that the nation has historically restricted dangerous and unusual weapons – and can continue to do so, said Douglas Letter, the chief legal officer for the Brady gun violence prevention advocacy group.

"Obviously, there are disagreements on where that line should be drawn," Letter said. "We think it absolutely should be drawn so that assault weapons bans ... are constitutional."

Landmark Second Amendment rulings

Courts have been debating what is allowed after the justices ruled in 2008 that the Second Amendment protects an individual's right to possess firearms for traditionally lawful purposes.

That landmark decision was followed two years later by a ruling that the Second Amendment applies to state and local governments – the source of most gun regulations.

And in 2022, the court – in New York State Rifle & Pistol Association v. Bruen – created the "historical tradition" test.

But in 2024, the court said domestic abusers could be prevented from having a gun, ruling that only an "historical analogue" and not a "historical twin" is required, according to Notre Dame Law School associate professor Haley Proctor, who specializes in the Second Amendment.

"The decision led many to speculate that the court was backing away from Bruen's demanding test," Proctor wrote. "When it comes to common-sense measures like disarming abusive boyfriends, the court seemed like it was not going to be too picky about the government's historical evidence."

Historical analogies can be bewildering, one expert says

Still, the historical test was robustly applied in the June decisions.

"What we see is the justices sort of tacking back and forth, trying to make this Bruen history and tradition test work across the spectrum of gun rights and regulation questions that come up," said Darrell Miller, a University of Chicago law professor.

Miller agrees with Jackson's criticisms that the test has not delivered on its promises of being simpler to apply and more constraining on the ability of judges to reach their preferred outcome compared with analyzing whether a restriction was sufficiently tailored to a modern policy goal.

Plus, the debates about historical analogies can leave observers scratching their heads, he said.

"When they come down with decisions that ask questions like, 'Is a modern jet airplane more like a horse, or is it more like a carriage, or is it more like a boat?' I think people that are paying attention just feel a little bewildered," Miller said.

Drinking habits of the founding fathers

In the case about whether regular use of marijuana can disqualify someone from owning a gun, for example, Justice Neil Gorsuch emphasized how much alcohol was consumed by John Adams, George Washington, James Madison and Thomas Jefferson.

"Had habitual drunkard laws applied to those who simply drank regularly, many notable early Americans could have faced trouble," Gorsuch wrote in rejecting the old laws as justification for the modern one.

Joseph Blocher, cofounder of the Center for Firearms Law at Duke University School of Law, said that while history always matters when interpreting the Constitution, people on both sides of the gun control debate would probably be surprised by the level of historical detail in some of the decisions.

The daily drinking habits of the founding fathers may be interesting to read about, he said, "but there's a disconnect there between what most people think the Constitution is for."

"It would be weird if the federal law prohibiting gun possession by habitual users of controlled substances were to become constitutional if it turned out that James Madison drank only half a pint of whiskey instead of a full pint," he said. "It's just a strange way to think about law. It feels to me like it's asking an awful lot of history – more in some cases, really, than it can bear."

Split lower court decisions

Applying the historical test to bans on AR-15s could be challenging because the weapons are far more powerful than the guns Americans used when the Second Amendment was adopted.

"From 1791 through the mid-nineteenth century, the ubiquitous firearm was a single-shot, muzzle-load firearm," a divided panel of judges on the Chicago-based 7th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals said in July when upholding Illinois' ban on certain semiautomatic rifles and high-capacity magazines. "AR-15s equipped with large-capacity magazines are a far cry from these antecedents."

Like other appeals courts that have upheld similar bans, the 7th Circuit judges said the laws could be supported by historical rules about Bowie knives. Because the knives' large blades caused particularly bloody and gruesome injuries, many state legislatures banned them or imposed prohibitive taxes, the 7th Circuit panel said in its 2-1 decision.

But days later, a different appeals court ruled against New Jersey's assault weapons ban.

Are Bowie knives like AR-15s?

The Bowie knife restrictions don't work as an historical justification, the Philadelphia-based 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals said in a 10-5 vote.

There's no evidence that Bowie knives were commonly used for lawful purposes before they were restricted, the court said. By contrast, there are about 24 million AR-15s and similar sports weapons in circulation in the United States, according to the court.

"Even if semi-automatic rifles are disproportionately used in some crimes," the majority said, "those may still represent a small fraction of those weapons' overwhelmingly lawful use."

'The iPhone of guns'

Blocher, at Duke University School of Law, said it's hard to see how the Supreme Court could give a partial win to each side in the AR-15 case as the justices did in their decision about gun owners who regularly use pot.

In that opinion, Gorsuch described the ruling as a narrow one that left untouched gun bans on drug addicts or others considered too dangerous to have a firearm.

The upcoming AR-15 case also has the challenge of how prominent the weapons have become in the national debate. They're connected in the public mind with mass shootings. But they're popular with law-abiding gun owners.

"These weapons have become very, very wrapped up in identity on many sides of the debate," Blocher said.

Trump pressures Thune over fate of SAVE Act

President says Senate should stay until passage

Joey Garrison and Zachary Schermele
USA TODAY

"If somebody can show me ... how we get an answer to this, I'm all for it," said Sen. John Thune, R-South Dakota. ANNABELLE GORDON/REUTERS

WASHINGTON – President Donald Trump is calling for Senate Majority Leader John Thune to keep the Senate in session and not allow lawmakers to break for summer recess until Senate Republicans pass his voter ID bill.

Trump's demand in a July 27 post on Truth Social comes as the president has applied increasing pressure on Thune to find a way to pass the long-stalled SAVE America Act in the Senate. The bill would require proof of citizenship and voter identification to vote in federal elections while dramatically scaling back mail-in voting ahead of the 2026 midterm elections.

"John Thune should not allow the United States Senate to 'leave town' until it passes The Save America Act or, far better still, TERMINATES THE FILIBUSTER, where Republicans can then quickly pass everything they ever dreamed of," Trump said in the post.

The Senate is set to go on recess Aug. 7 and return to Washington Sept. 14.

Thune, speaking to reporters after Trump's social media post, wouldn't rule out canceling the Senate recess but suggested he would do so only if there's a realistic path to pass the SAVE America Act.

"If somebody can show me how we get an outcome, how we get a result, how we get an answer to this, I'm all for it," Thune said. "But if we are going to be sitting here in endless quorum calls, I don't know if that's in anybody's best interest."

Thune said he last spoke to Trump about 10 days ago.

Tension between the two men has mounted over that time. White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt said last week that Trump's "patience is running out" with Thune amid the Senate's inaction on the legislation.

Trump, in a speech in Georgia on July 22, urged his supporters to contact Thune over the legislation. "Everybody call John Thune at the Senate – he's the leader of the Republican Party – and tell him to get this stuff approved," the president said.

Trump says he has a 'good relationship' with Thune

Trump said he has a "good relationship" with the Republican Senate leader. "He's just got to get his job done," the president told reporters on July 27.

Asked if he wants Thune replaced as leader, Trump said, "I haven't even thought of it."

Trump repeatedly has called for Senate Republicans to abolish the filibuster, the Senate's 60-vote threshold, to allow Republicans to pass the SAVE America Act with a simple majority in a chamber they control 53-47. Yet the proposal doesn't appear to have enough support to pass even without the filibuster.

All Senate Democrats have expressed opposition to the act. In addition, four Republicans – Susan Collins of Maine, Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, Lisa Murkowski of Alaska and Thom Tillis of North Carolina – voted against a motion in June to add the legislation to a Republican budget package.

Republican support nowhere close to ending filibuster, Thune says

Thune suggested opposition among Senate Republicans to eliminate the filibuster to pass the SAVE Act is even greater. He recounted to reporters that Trump's own legislative team found about 15 no votes in a group of 20 Republican senators polled on ending the filibuster and the Senate's "blue slip" process, which Trump wants eliminated as well so senators would no longer hold virtual veto power over judicial nominations in their states.

"This is not an open question, it's just a fact. And the facts don't change," Thune said. "Now, if he can change the facts, and start moving some of those senators who are no into yeses, then we can have a different conversation."

In a push to bypass a Senate filibuster, House Republicans approved a $95 billion budget framework July 22 backed by House Speaker Mike Johnson that includes elements of the SAVE America Act. Johnson's goal is to pass the framework through a budget process called reconciliation, which would require a simple majority in the Senate.

Yet the Senate parliamentarian could strike down an attempt to pass a voting overhaul as a budget bill. And whether a reconciliation bill with components of the SAVE Act could reach a 50-vote threshold in the Senate was unclear.

Still, Trump called on the Senate last week to adopt the budget resolution before leaving for the August recess, saying on Truth Social, "We are ready to work side-by-side with the Senate to get this done for the American People!"

OPINION

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Noncitizen voter report shows system works

Chris Brennan
USA TODAY

There are two very different views on election integrity and voter fraud currently espoused by U.S. politicians.

The loudest view, shouted at every opportunity by President Donald Trump but not supported by evidence, is that voter fraud is rampant in our country, especially among noncitizens allegedly casting ballots.

The more nuanced view, with a foundation in actual evidence, is that voter fraud and noncitizen voting are rare occurrences that our election infrastructure is designed to catch and eliminate, and to prosecute as necessary.

The news out of New Jersey proves the second point of view, even as those who spout Trump's accusations try to hijack it as evidence of their unsubstantiated claims.

NJ didn't cover up computer glitch

New Jersey Gov. Mikie Sherrill, a Democrat elected last fall, on July 21 announced that as many as 6,600 noncitizens were registered to vote in her state in 2023 and 2024 because of a computer software error, though fewer than 400 actually cast ballots.

Sherrill and her staff did not try to cover up or defend this glitch. They caught it. They publicly announced it. And they are replacing the vendor that caused the problem.

The governor saw where this was going, too.

The president has been banging away at Republicans in Congress to pass his so-called SAVE America Act, which he casts as crucial for election integrity – but which is really just an unconstitutional power grab that would allow Trump to pick the voters, rather than having the voters pick who represents them in Congress in November's midterm elections.

Sherrill, in a July 21 social media post, said Trump is trying to "weaponize elections for political gain" and "has zero credibility on the issue of election integrity," citing his efforts for more than a decade to "undermine Americans' faith in our elections."

The president did that, she noted, by lying about results when he didn't like them, trying to overturn the 2020 election results, and then defunding federal election security efforts during his second term.

Here's the truth about noncitizens voting in America: It's been illegal for noncitizens to vote in federal elections since the 1920s, and Congress made it a federal crime 30 years ago.

There are 12 states where legal residents who are not American citizens can vote in some local elections, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

Any American who interacts with the government in any way knows mistakes happen. That applies to elections and how they're run. Trump and his Republican allies in Congress would have you believe that those mistakes are intentional. But these kinds of problems crop up in red states, too.

I learned about this back in 2017, a year after Trump won my home state, Pennsylvania, while securing his first term as president.

Nonresidents alerted PA of error

Al Schmidt, the top Republican election official in Philadelphia at the time, discovered that the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation's computer kiosks used by legal nonresidents seeking driver's licenses had a glitch that also let them register to vote.

Many of those nonresidents, more than 1,000 since 1972, had discovered the problem on their own and sought to cancel their voter registrations, the state found. So the very people Trump claims are sneaking into our elections are the ones helping to point out problems in voter registration.

The problem got fixed. And Schmidt is now Pennsylvania's secretary of state, overseeing elections under a Democrat as governor, Josh Shapiro.

This is the sort of context that the president loathes as he seeks to seize control of our elections. But the context is out there.

The Public Interest Legal Foundation, a conservative group "dedicated to election integrity," in a 2020 report found that at least 19 noncitizens were registered to vote in Palm Beach County, Florida, even after they identified themselves as noncitizens. Who else is registered to vote in that county? Trump.

What's happening in red states

Look to red states to show us how rare noncitizen voting is:

- In Georgia, a 2024 audit by the Republican secretary of state found 20 noncitizens who had registered to vote, with nine casting ballots, out of 8.2 million registered voters.
- In Utah, "a comprehensive citizenship review" from April 2025 to May 2026 found 27 noncitizens registered to vote out of more than 2 million registered voters.
- In Kansas, a federal appeals court in 2020 rejected a law pushed by state Attorney General Kris Kobach that required proof of citizenship to register to vote. The judges in that ruling found that at most, 67 noncitizens tried to register to vote in Kansas in the 19 prior years and only 39 succeeded, which they called "incredibly slight evidence" of a problem.

If Kobach's name sounds familiar, that's because he was cochair of the "Commission on Election Integrity" that Trump launched in the first year of his first term, only to disband eight months later because it was such a mess.

That's how this always plays out. Trump and his allies thrash about with unsubstantiated claims or outright lies about election integrity.

But if you seek context, you find out just how empty the president's claims really are.

You can follow USA TODAY columnist Chris Brennan on the Bluesky platform, @bychrisbrennan.bsky.social, and on X, @ByChrisBrennan

ICE makes traffic stops more deadly than ever. DHS knows.

Thaddeus L. Johnson and Natasha N. Johnson
Opinion contributors

On July 7 in Houston, an Immigration and Customs Enforcement agent fatally shot a driver, Lorenzo Salgado Araujo, during an operation that may have been targeting someone else.

Less than a week later in Biddeford, Maine, an ICE officer shot and killed Johan Sebastián Durán Guerrero during an attempted vehicle stop in which he, too, was not the intended target.

Both shootings remain under investigation, neither produced body camera footage, and together they illustrate how immigration enforcement can profoundly affect people far beyond the name on an agent's list.

These cases also expose a broader accountability problem. The Department of Homeland Security tracks enforcement incidents, but its tally excludes many people whom agents threaten, hold at gunpoint, pepper spray or restrain in the course of their work. Now, the FBI will no longer investigate confrontations with ICE and other federal officers.

As The New York Times reports, "Such a change would sharply limit law enforcement scrutiny of immigration agents."

EN MEMORIA DE
Sebastián
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Descansa en paz, querido Sebastián.
JUSTICIA PARA SEBASTIÁN
Tu vida y tu historia no serán olvidadas.

A memorial in Biddeford, Maine, on July 14 for Johan Sebastián Durán Guerrero, a day after the 25-year-old was fatally shot in his car by an Immigration and Customs Enforcement agent. DEB CRAM/SEACOASTONLINE/USA TODAY NETWORK VIA REUTERS

ICE agents arrested 10,000 people in just 5 days

While the Trump administration has stepped back from headline-grabbing ICE surges in American cities, its immigration crackdown continues. Federal agents arrested 10,000 people in just five days at the end of June, according to The Associated Press.

Memphis shows what this quieter model looks like. Since January, nearly half of ICE arrests there have involved people with no convictions.

MLK50 and ProPublica found that from October to February, the federally led Memphis Safe Task Force had arrested more than 800 immigrants.

Of those, only 17, or 2%, also were taken into custody on a violent crime charge or warrant.

About 4 in 5 of these arrests began with traffic stops.

In short, this was not a mass raid. It was immigration enforcement folded into routine policing.

That shift makes the safety and accountability of traffic stops increasingly consequential.

After the fatal shootings in Texas and Maine, ICE agents were told to suspend most vehicle stops nationwide, except those involving serious criminal targets, pending additional training.

President Donald Trump overturned the pause the next day, saying traffic stops should continue.

But the reversal does not erase why ICE paused: Its leaders saw enough risk to reassess the tactic.

Whether force was justified in any encounter is an important question. It will depend on what each person did and what threat, if any, the driver posed. Someone trying to strike an agent – as ICE accused Salgado Araujo of doing in Houston – presents a different danger.

In the fatal shooting near Portland on July 13, the ICE officer has defended his action to his former wife. "I asked him why he did it," she told The Times, "and he said, 'The guy tried to hit me.' "

News coverage can show what happened in a particular encounter. Many others go unreported. Only comprehensive data can show how often such incidents happen. DHS records, unfortunately, leave out the details needed to fully assess them.

Missing records hide misconduct

Since May 2022, DHS has published department-wide data on use-of-force encounters. But it counts incidents, not every person or application of force.

The Government Accountability Office notes that one incident can include several officers, several people and multiple use-of-force events.

If three agents pepper spray 10 people during one arrest, DHS reports a single incident. The other nine people disappear from the total, along with information about whether they were targets, alleged obstructors or bystanders.

Missing records makes misconduct harder to detect. That blind spot is widening just as the government removes other tools of accountability.

In 2025, the Department of Justice shut down the National Law Enforcement Accountability Database, which contained disciplinary findings and other records involving more than 4,000 officers.

Nearly a quarter of its entries came from Customs and Border Protection, reflecting the coordinated role that CBP and ICE play during immigration-enforcement surges.

Losing this shared record makes it harder to identify officers with histories of misconduct.

A sound federal policy to protect members of the public from unintended harm during immigration operations would have three key components:

- Comprehensive reporting on the number of stops and encounters by federal officers, every person threatened or subjected to force, and whether that force involved physical tactics, chemical agents, a pointed gun or an explicit threat.
- Clear rules for initiating and ending routine vehicle stops, supported by body camera requirements, preservation of footage and records indicating whether the person stopped was the intended target.
- Prompt, independent review whenever federal agents point a gun at, pepper spray or restrain someone who was not the operation's target, with findings made public without revealing sensitive tactics.

A restored federal misconduct repository would provide an additional layer of accountability.

These rules would protect sensitive operations while showing who was harmed and why.

In a climate where unintended casualties are sowing growing concern, they could also restore public trust while protecting the innocent.

Legitimate enforcement needs a record the American public can examine and test. Count every person. Preserve the evidence. Protect the right to observe. Name who is responsible.

Thaddeus L. Johnson, a former police officer, is a senior fellow at the Council on Criminal Justice and teaches at Georgia State University. His wife, Natasha N. Johnson, is an assistant professor of educational studies and research at Augusta University.

USA TODAY

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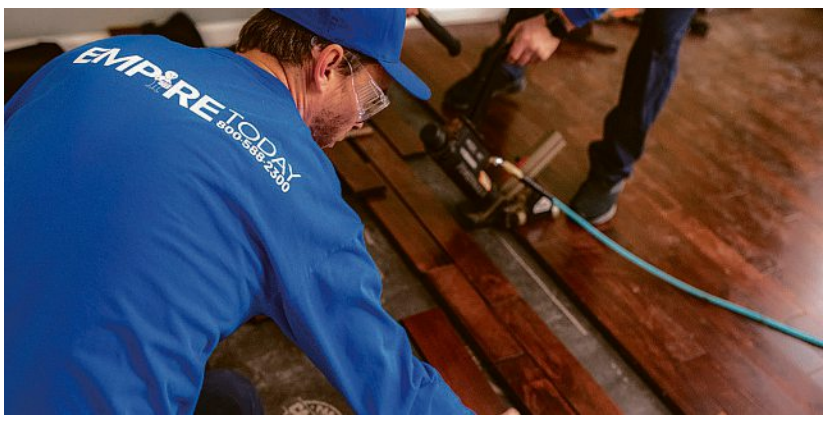

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GENESIS G80 REVIEW

Premium features without high price

Brand disrupts rankings with its innovation

Charles Singh
Nashville Tennessean
USA TODAY NETWORK

I spent a week driving the 2026 Genesis G80, the South Korean luxury brand's midsize sedan. We recently tested the G90 full-size sedan for USA TODAY Cars and wanted to compare the two for prospective drivers.

Genesis doesn't have a long production history like its rivals BMW and Mercedes-Benz, but the car brand is disrupting rankings thanks to innovative and value-oriented models.

The 2026 Genesis G80 has a ultra-luxurious cabin, bold driving dynamics and plenty of great standard features. Here's what I thought of the midsize luxury car after driving it every day for a week.

What stands out about the 2026 Genesis G80?

Like its big brother the Genesis G90, the G80 has an understated curb appeal. Its exterior is more classy than bold, and its front grille is its defining characteristic.

The G80's interior quality stands out because once you pop the door open, it feels like something out of a James Bond film. Quiet luxury is tough to ignore when executed correctly, and Genesis has masterfully designed this cabin.

Aside from being comfortable and stylish, the 2026 Genesis G80 is also fun to drive thanks to a gutsy power train and nimble handling.

Performance, handling and efficiency: How does it drive?

Genesis' midsize car is powerful for its size. It accelerates quickly and handles well on highways and tight suburban roads. Its city gas mileage isn't the best (20 mpg), but its highway gas mileage makes up for it (29 mpg).

See GENESIS G80, Page 2B

The 2026 Genesis G80. CHARLES SINGH FOR USA TODAY

Ford Custom Garage brings custom options to Mustang GT models, adding power, chassis and aerodynamic upgrades.

CUSTOMIZATION GROWS AT FORD

Automaker's Custom Garage toy store delivers goods

Henry Payne The Detroit News | USA TODAY NETWORK

Ford Motor Co.'s toy store just got a lot bigger. ● With extensive accessory options for brand icons Bronco, Maverick, Mustang, and F-150 models (with more models in the pipeline), Ford Custom Garage encourages owners to customize their new buys with a dizzying array of decals, wheels, interiors, shocks, and engine performance parts – all under the umbrella of a factory warranty. Goodbye aftermarket, hello Ford dealer configurator. ● The DIY-palooza not only acknowledges that 46% of new Ford buyers accessorize their models, but it leans into Ford's redefinition as a maker of passion vehicles. No longer wedded to filling every market segment, Ford – like a premium brand – seeks to light a fire with customers. "[We're] getting out of the boring-car business and into the iconic-vehicle business," CEO Jim Farley told CAR magazine in 2024. The cheapest model on the Ford lot is now a $30,000 Maverick.

Think Porsche which has created an à la carte menu for its cars so owners can spec it to their individual taste.

"There are vehicles that we want to make sure capture a broad audience, but we always know there's individualized taste," said Ford Racing Parts Planning Supervisor Ryan Long. "Everybody's unique. We want to resonate with those individual customers ... and provide them more of what they are looking for. [We] give them the option to take their vehicle to the next level safely through a dealer warranty."

After a day burning rubber all over Michigan International Speedway's 1,400-acre campus in the Irish Hills, here are the highlights of the hottest accessories for your next Ford Dream Cruiser.

Mustang FP800S. The FP800S package puts a $48,795 Mustang GT on

See FORD, Page 2B

Henry Payne, Detroit News auto columnist, exercised the Ford Custom Garage-equipped Mustang FP800S at Michigan International Speedway. PHOTOS BY HENRY PAYNE/USA TODAY NETWORK

TOYOTA RAV4 REVIEW

Popular hybrid Toyota SUV gets great mileage

Keith Laing
USA TODAY

As drivers prioritize fuel efficiency, the Toyota RAV4 remains a top seller, with the 2026 model offered only as a hybrid.

I drove the hybrid version of the 2026 Toyota RAV4 for a week to see if it deserves its Kelley Blue Book's Compact SUV Best Buy Award and 2026 Green Car of the Year award from the Green Car Journal.

The Toyota RAV4 GR Sport model I tested is the highest trim of the plug-in hybrid version of the very popular two-row SUV, and it starts at $48,500. Entry-level hybrid trims that don't plug up start a little under $32,000. Plug-in hybrid models start at $41,500. I've recently tested the other electrified models from Toyota, including the Toyota bZ and the Lexus RZ, as well as the Chevrolet Blazer EV and the Mazda CX-50 hybrid.

The Toyota RAV4 GR Sport plug-in hybrid vehicle starts at just less than $50,000. KEITH LAING/USA TODAY

The Toyota RAV4 plug-in hybrid stands out for its standard features, competitive pricing and everyday practicality. Here's what I learned after a week behind the wheel of Toyota's top-selling two-row crossover SUV.

What makes the 2026 Toyota RAV4 hybrid stand out?

The 2026 Toyota RAV4 stands out from rivals in its segment for its unique exterior and interior designs. It also has a strong value proposition for a family car (starting at just over $32,000 for a regular hybrid base model), which propels it to the top of ranking lists at a time when the average new car costs nearly $50,000, according to Cox Automotive.

In a week of testing, the Toyota RAV4 hybrid's interior and cargo area felt spacious for daily driving needs. I also enjoyed the RAV4's large infotainment screen and Android Auto and Apple CarPlay connectivity.

How does the 2026 Toyota RAV4 hybrid drive?

The 2026 Toyota RAV4 offers a smooth, quiet and comfortable ride while delivering strong fuel economy as a hybrid. It handles well, and its acceleration is quick enough to keep daily driving fun.

A daily driver might easily forget they are driving a hybrid vehicle until they realize they're averaging over 36 mpg combined in city and highway driving. The plug-in version of the RAV4 gets 54 miles of range in all-electric driving.

The RAV4 hybrid comes with a 2.5-liter hybrid engine. Toyota said it offers up to 324 net combined horsepower.

The hybrid SUV achieves an estimated 40 mpg in city driving and 33 mpg on the highway. Our GR Sport trim test

See RAV4 REVIEW, Page 2B

Genesis G80

Continued from Page 1B

The 2026 Genesis G90 uses a 2.5-liter turbocharged four-cylinder that produces a massive 300 horsepower, which is great for driving enthusiasts. Genesis also offers a 3.5-liter twin-turbocharged V6 with 375 horsepower, a thrilling amount of power for a midsize car.

The G90 boasts the performance of a sports car, but its cabin is clearly the star of the show.

The 2026 Genesis G80. PROVIDED BY GENESIS

Interior, tech and comfort: What's it like inside?

Genesis' midsize luxury sedan comes standard with comfy high-quality premium leatherette seats. Both front and rear outboard seats are heated, and the front row of seats has massaging capabilities in some trims.

The instrument panel is wrapped in leather, and the cabin features a matte finish wood trim.

Will the 2026 Genesis G80 fit your lifestyle?

The G80 comfortably seats five. It's 197.6 inches long, 75.8 inches wide (without mirrors) and 57.7 inches tall.

The Genesis G80's rear seat has 38.7 inches of legroom. It has 13.1 cubic feet of cargo space, which is adequate for small families and commuters.

Genesis' luxury car best suits long-distance commuters and professionals who value advanced tech and an upscale cabin.

Pricing, value and competitors: Is the 2026 Genesis G80 worth buying?

The 2026 Genesis G80 starts at $58,450. It comes in five trims, including the 3.5 Prestige Black AWD, which I tested.

2026 Genesis G80 trims

- G80 2.5T AWD: $58,450
- G80 2.5T Advanced AWD: $64,040
- G80 2.5T Sport Prestige AWD: $69,950
- G80 3.5T Sport Prestige AWD: $78,350
- G80 3.5T Prestige Black AWD: $79,350

The G80 is worth the money because of its top-tier quality. Upper trims may price out some drivers, but Genesis trim levels vary enough in price that there are plenty of options for buyers. Not every driver will splurge on the Prestige Black AWD trim, but it's worth the money for auto enthusiasts who want to experience the best G80 tech, features and driving experience.

Genesis' midsize luxury car competes against rivals like the BMW 5 Series and Mercedes-Benz E-Class. The G80 has the most powerful base engine of the trio. BMW's midsize luxury car is the best choice for steering response and driving engagement. The Mercedes-Benz E-Class beats its rivals in terms of cabin quality and tech.

Final verdict: Who should buy the 2026 Genesis G80?

The 2026 Genesis G80 is designed for commuters and drivers with small families who want a refined sedan with engaging acceleration and handling. It's a luxury car that challenges some of the most impactful nameplates in its segment.

If you're looking for a luxury car with a low-key exterior and a lavish cabin, the G80 is a solid pick. Its quiet interior feels immersive and its rear seat feels like a V.I.P section for passengers. I enjoyed the Prestige Black trim's powerful engine.

The G80, like the G90, delivers an elite driving and ownership experience for an attainable price. Look out BMW and Mercedes-Benz, Genesis is shaking up rankings in the midsize and full-size luxury car segments.

The 2026 Toyota RAV4 GR Sport plug-in hybrid features a leather, heated steering wheel. KEITH LAING/USA TODAY

RAV4 review

Continued from Page 1B

vehicle got over 500 mpg on a single full tank of gas without having to charge its battery.

Will the 2026 Toyota RAV4 hybrid fit your lifestyle?

The Toyota RAV4 hybrid is 182 inches long, 65.4 inches tall and 74 inches wide (without mirrors). The GR Sport trim model I tested offers 37.8 cubic feet of cargo space behind the second-row seats, which I found sufficient for luggage and grocery hauls.

Is the 2026 RAV4 hybrid worth it?

The Toyota RAV4 hybrid starts just over $31,000 before taxes and additional fees, which seems modest for a hybrid crossover SUV in light of most modern new car prices. The regular RAV4 hybrid is available in six trims, and the plug-in hybrid is available in four trims.

Plug-in options range from the base model SE, which starts at $41,000, to the top-of-the-line GR Sport I tested. The GR Sport hybrid version starts at $48,500 and comes equipped with 20-inch black alloy wheels, high-performance summer tires, red-painted brake calipers, standard all-wheel drive, and numerous convenience and safety features.

I enjoyed the souped-up GR Sport but probably would opt for the slightly cheaper middle Woodland or XSE trim if I were looking to get the most bang for my buck. The plug-in hybrid Woodland version of the RAV4 starts at just $45,300; the XSE retails for more than $42,000.

The Toyota RAV4 competes in the crowded two-row hybrid SUV segment with models from competitors such as the Kia Sportage, Hyundai Tucson, Mazda CX-50, Honda CR-V and Volvo XC60.

Who should buy the 2026 Toyota RAV4?

You should buy the 2026 Toyota RAV4 if you need a sporty hybrid SUV that gets great mileage and can haul up to five people.

The GR Sport model I tested comes with a 12.9-inch touchscreen infotainment system that has Apple CarPlay, Android Auto and Bluetooth connectivity. It has a panoramic view monitor and comes equipped with Toyota Safety Sense 4.0, which includes safety features like Pre-Collision System with Pedestrian Detection, Full-Speed Range Dynamic Radar Cruise Control, Lane Departure Alert with Steering Assist, Lane Tracing Assist, Road Sign Assist, Automatic High Beams, and Proactive Driving Assist.

The power sockets on a 2026 Ram 1500 Tradesman with its On Board Power System, a feature that turns the truck into a power generator. JUSTIN WAN/USA TODAY NETWORK

Ram pickup trucks can become generators

Liam Rappleye
Detroit Free Press
USA TODAY NETWORK

Nowadays, pickup trucks – especially those the Detroit Three automakers make – deliver a lot of power to the wheels. But some Detroit trucks can also deliver a lot of power to things like buzz saws, camping equipment or ... microwaves.

The Ram 1500 On Board Power System, recently tested by the Detroit Free Press, part of the USA TODAY Network, essentially allows a run-of-the-mill pickup truck to double as a generator. It works simply: There is an electrical hookup in the bed of the truck that has two outlets. Park the truck, leave the engine running and plug in what you need to power. Power strips work, too, as long as the power demand remains below the maximum output of the generator. Ram offers several power configurations, including up to 2 kilowatts of power in the 1500, with heavy-duty Ram pickups offering up to 2.4 kilowatts. The sales pitch from Ram is that blue-collar workers often tote around mobile generators to power their workstations, or rely on larger, more expensive vehicles to power their tools. With the On Board Power System, there is no need to lug around a generator because it is built into the truck.

The feature is available on all Ram 1500 trim levels, for $995.

Ford Motor Co. and General Motors also have similar features available in their trucks, too, at around the same price range. Ford first released its Pro Power Onboard feature in 2021, and has since sold offerings ranging from a comparable 2-kilowatts power system to a 9.6-kilowatts package (that could power a house or food truck for several hours) on the brand's now-discontinued EV pickup, the Lightning.

The Free Press used the On Board Power System to successfully test a microwave, lamp and fan during a hot day in Detroit.

Ford

Continued from Page 1B

a steroid diet with 810 horsepower and 615 horsepower compared with the standard V-8's 480 and 415. That's, ahem, just five horses shy of a $327,960 Mustang GTD supercar and more than a $106k, 795-horse Mustang Dark Horse SC for way fewer dollars.

WAUURGGH! I popped the clutch at 3,000 RPM and laid rubber down the paddock of MIS, the FP800's torque overwhelming the rear tires.

You can choose the $10,500 Whipple supercharger by itself in the configurator ... but the safer bet is the full, $18,500 FP800 package (before installation labor) that includes upgraded rear half shafts to handle the added 50% twist. The package also comes with upgrades springs, dampers, and sway bar for a 25% increase in chassis stiffness.

That was evident as I flung my Mustang FP800S around the infield course. I inhaled short chutes with the massive V-8 torque – the 5.0-liter Coyote engine howling – but the stiffer chassis meant my hair didn't turn white entering approaching turns. Stable turn-in, planted exit.

But wait, there's more.

Buyers can also option active, magnetic-ride shocks so you have three drive modes to manage ride stiffness: NORMAL, SPORT, TRACK. Owners, in addition to the FP800S's signature colored nostrils/wheels, can option carbon fiber accessories like a rear wing.

In the universe of GT, Dark Horse, Dark Horse SC and GTD trims (not to mention aftermarket Shelby, Roush, and RTR models), you'll want your custom mod to stand out.

Ford F-150. By contrast, I liked the 700-horsepower, $10,250 supercharger-only option for Ford's light duty truck.

Available on any V-8-powered trim, the Whipple supercharger is the ultimate stealth performance accessory. The Porsche at the Dream Cruise stoplight won't know what hit 'em until their doors have been sucked off – the eerie shriek of the supercharged truck disappearing in the distance.

Like the 'Stang's FP800S package, however, the F-150's full, $26,875 FP700S package brings plenty of bling. Think bespoke lowered suspension, wheels, tires, fender badge, graphic, and front splitter on any 5.0-liter Coyote V-8-equipped F-50 trim.

VROOOM! That sonic boom you heard all the way in Detroit when I nailed the throttle for a 0-60 mph run in an FP700S-equipped Lariat trim was thanks to an extra Custom Garage exhaust accessory. How loud? It drowned out the supercharger whine. Superchargers are in, electric motors are out.

Maverick SV300T. Not content to let big brother F-series have all the fun, the Maverick truck also has Custom Garage game.

The sub-compact pickup has been a mega-hit from the hybrid fuel-sipper to the Lobo street rod. Lobo boasts 250-horses from its 2.0-liter turbo-4 and drifting abilities thanks to twin, rear-clutch packs pulled off the ol' Focus RS hot hatch.

The ST300T package (T for turbo) offers the Maverick's athletic suspension to any 2.0-liter turbo-4-powered Mav model. That, and an extra 50 horsepower (got a total of 300) courtesy of the Mustang Ecoboost's turbocharger strapped to the engine.

"The SV300T was based on ... programs like the Fiesta ST and the Focus ST and RS [that] added personality, character and performance for affordable, entry-level vehicles," said Long. "We wanted to recreate that character on a modern vehicle. So, in the world of a Maverick, [we created] that performance characteristic that people really liked in the Focus ST."

I had a blast hustling the SV300T-equipped Maverick Lobo and XLT models around an MIS parking lot autocross track. The $5,000 SV300T package also looks good standing still thanks to a bespoke front splitter, wheels, and graphic to compliment intercooler, exhaust, and suspension upgrades under the sheet metal.

Bronco. The off-road dirt kicker already is a customizer's favorite with add-ons like the Sasquatch tire package and more models – Base, Big Bend, Black Diamond, Outer Banks, Badlands, Wildtrak, Heritage Edition, 60th Anniversary Edition, Stroppe Edition, Raptor – than I have socks. The Custom Garage adds to that choice with a cornucopia of custom packages: Sinister Bronze, Matte Black, Dark Trail Series Titanium Gray, Coastal, and my favorite ORV (short for Off-Road Vehicle).

The latter echoes the capabilities of aftermarket shops like Vaughn Gittin Jr.'s RTR (Ready to Rock) outfit that already provides dealer-delivered, warranty-covered, hot rod packages like the $26,595 Bronco RTR ROVR upgrade. For less cost, the OVR package brings similar capability with 35-inch tires, 2-inch suspension lift, upgraded Fox shocks, skid plates, and steel bumper.

And for those seeking more giddyap, a Custom Garage upgrade will juice Bronco with 38 more horsepower.

50★States

News from across the USA

ALABAMA Bayou La Batre: Bayou La Batre was recently recognized by World Atlas as one of the best Gulf Coast towns for retirees.

ALASKA Juneau: The University of Alaska Southeast has partnered with Mitchell Hamline School of Law in Minnesota to allow students to earn law degrees from Alaska through hybrid and accelerated programs that reduce the need to move out of state, KTOO reported.

ARKANSAS Ashdown: The Justice Department has proposed a settlement requiring Domtar's Ashdown pulp mill to pay a $1.5 million penalty and spend at least $2.6 million on pollution controls and monitoring upgrades to resolve alleged Clean Air Act and state air pollution violations, KARK reported.

CALIFORNIA Sacramento: More than 600 data brokers will soon be required to begin processing requests from California residents seeking to have their personal information deleted through the state's new privacy platform.

COLORADO Denver: Colorado Parks and Wildlife says it is investigating an uncollared wolf's death in northwest Colorado.

CONNECTICUT Mystic: Mystic Aquarium scientists will embark on a research expedition to the Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument on July 29, studying marine life and ocean conditions in one of the Atlantic Ocean's most protected and least explored regions.

DELAWARE Wilmington: Brandywine Zoo unveiled its new Mixed Species Exhibit, Hidden Falls, during a ribbon-cutting ceremony July 23 that gave visitors a first look at the habitat and its five resident animal species.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA Washington: Officials are investigating damage to the German-American Friendship Garden fountain on the National Mall after chunks of concrete were found broken away from the recently restored landmark near the Washington Monument, WUSA9 reported.

FLORIDA Miami: The Miami area's cost of living surpassed that of New York, according to the most recent regional price comparison data from the Bureau of Economic Analysis.

GEORGIA Columbia County: Google is coming to Columbia County. The mammoth multinational company that has helped shape how people use computer technology "will be the sole end-user and operator of the Columbia County Data Center" at White Oak Technology Park between Appling and Harlem, the county's Board of Commissioners and Economic Development Authority jointly announced.

HAWAII Honokaa: An 8,000-square-foot estate previously owned by Priscilla Presley and Lisa Marie Presley has been listed for sale for $17.5 million, Hawaii News Now reported.

IDAHO St. Maries: A Moscow angler set a new certified-weight state record for a Westslope cutthroat trout after catching a 13.6-inch, 0.71-pound trout in the St. Maries River, KTVB7 reported.

ILLINOIS Springfield: A new wheelchair-accessible van donated by the HSHS St. John's Foundation will help older adults and people with disabilities in Sangamon County get to medical appointments and other destinations in the Springfield area.

INDIANA Indianapolis: Two Indiana congressmen have formally demanded that Indiana University fire an adjunct professor and comedian who delivered a cake frosted with the word "congratudolences" to Lindsey Graham's former Senate office.

IOWA Des Moines: Iowa will set aside federal survivor benefits for children in foster care with a deceased parent or eligible relative instead of using the funds to pay for their care, Gov. Kim Reynolds has announced. The change will allow the state to put the Social Security Survivor Benefits of foster children into dedicated accounts to be accessed for education, housing and other purposes when they turn 18, rather than applying the money toward the cost of foster care.

KANSAS Topeka: The Polk-Quincy Viaduct construction project is on schedule with a section likely to open by the end of the year, Transportation Secretary Calvin Reed said.

HIGHLIGHT: ARIZONA

Northern Arizona University ecologist Clare Aslan identifies a healthy Paradine plains cactus. SHI EN KIM/USA TODAY NETWORK

Coconino County: When the White Sage Fire swept the Kaibab Plateau last July, Clare Aslan and her students watched the satellite updates nervously as the flames encroached upon their monitoring sites. A rare, partially buried cactus grew in the direct line of fire. Nearly three months later, Aslan returned to the fire scar to assess the damage. Some of the Paradine plains cactus had survived. In a new study, Aslan and her team will monitor the recovery of the Paradine plains cactus for up to three years after the fire. They're concerned about whether it can still sustain pollinators and in turn produce new offspring. Rebooting its lifecycle faces another challenge that might be more formidable than the fire: drought.

KENTUCKY Louisville: Nearly 10 years after the school's inception, W.E.B. DuBois Academy has its own building. The $62 million building features an engineering lab, a culinary classroom and $8 million athletic facilities.

LOUISIANA Baton Rouge: Louisiana's population grew in 2024 for the first time since 2017, reversing a six-year decline as fewer residents left the state, according to a new migration analysis released by Leaders for a Better Louisiana.

MAINE Standish: The Bonny Eagle School District is replacing playground equipment at five schools after an inspection uncovered major safety concerns, WMTW reported.

MARYLAND Baltimore: Gov. Wes Moore announced nearly $4 million in NourishMD grants to 44 organizations across 18 counties to expand access to fresh, healthy food in communities affected by food deserts, WBAL reported.

MASSACHUSETTS Mount Washington: Travel + Leisure named Bash Bish Falls as the best waterfall in the Bay State because of its complex and jagged beauty as well as how accommodating it is to hikers of various skill levels.

MICHIGAN Oakland County: The Great Lakes Water Authority intends to invest $81 million to replace half-century-old pipes and modernize the water system along 14 Mile Road in Oakland County, an area hit by four major breaks in the last seven years.

MINNESOTA Minneapolis: The Minneapolis VA Medical Center has opened a long-awaited Women's Health Center that will provide dedicated primary care, specialty services and mental health care in a private, women-focused facility, KARE11 reported.

MISSISSIPPI Jackson: Jackson-Medgar Wiley Evers International Airport could be in line for a new terminal as airport officials begin searching for developers to lead a major overhaul of the facility.

MISSOURI Springfield: Children's Mercy with Mercy has launched a patient family advisory committee in Springfield to help shape pediatric services and improve the experience for families seeking specialized care closer to home. In its first meetings, members have begun providing feedback to leaders and providers involved in the partnership, according to a community announcement.

MONTANA Great Falls: City officials recently approved the Little Shell Tribe of Chippewa Indians of Montana's proposed Good Medicine housing development, clearing the way for a 115-unit community of apartments, duplexes and single-family homes aimed at expanding housing opportunities for tribal members and the broader community, Montana Free Press reported.

NEBRASKA Lincoln: Advocates are sounding the alarm after newly released data from the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services shows that Nebraska has seen SNAP enrollment fall nearly 17% over the past year, Nebraska Examiner reported.

NEVADA Carson City: Nevada Rep. Dina Titus is targeting state tax breaks for the only data center project approved on U.S. Bureau of Land Management acres, a controversial proposal 3 miles outside Boulder City limits, Nevada Current reported. In a letter to Gov. Joe Lombardo, Titus asked the governor to pause all data center tax breaks for projects built on federally managed land until the State Legislature has the chance to consider laws regulating the issue next year, according to the news outlet.

NEW HAMPSHIRE Hampton: The construction project to replace the Neil Underwood Bridge over Hampton/Seabrook Harbor is on budget and on schedule, and traffic should flow over it soon, according to the New Hampshire Department of Transportation.

NEW JERSEY Trenton: A new study from WalletHub ranks New Jersey in third-best place for school systems in the country.

NEW MEXICO Santa Teresa: Two convicted border smuggling guides were sentenced to prison following the death of a woman who was struggling to keep up and was left behind to die in the heat of the New Mexico desert, authorities said.

NEW YORK Albany: New York's cost of living is weighing on residents' minds as inflation outpaces many of their incomes and they consistently face the highest taxes in the country, new data reveals. Both the state government and local governments collect more tax revenue per resident than any other state as of 2023, data from the Citizens Budget Commission's "Competitive NYS" dashboard outlines.

NORTH CAROLINA Marshall: The town submitted its application to receive up to $10 million to renovate the historic courthouse into a cultural events center.

NORTH DAKOTA Medora: The Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library has raised over $500 million, surpassing its $450 million fundraising goal just weeks after opening to the public on July 4, North Dakota Monitor reported.

OHIO Columbus: A carousel featuring a prehistoric fish, the iconic butter cow, native wildlife and tributes to all 88 Ohio counties officially opened July 25 ahead of the 2026 Ohio State Fair. Gov. Mike DeWine, first lady Fran DeWine and Ohio Expo Center & State Fair leaders cut the ribbon on the new Ohio Children's Carousel, calling it the centerpiece of a yearslong transformation of the fairgrounds.

OKLAHOMA Oklahoma City: Building permits show Fun City Adventure Park, an indoor entertainment center with multiple locations nationwide, is planning to open in the city, though a date has not been yet confirmed.

OREGON Aurora: A controversial waste dumping pit on an Aurora hazelnut farm can reopen, Marion County commissioners decided. The operation, which includes a paved pad with six bays to accept waste from industrial vacuum excavation, or vactor trucks, is a legitimate farm use, commissioners said.

PENNSYLVANIA Philadelphia: The City of Brotherly Love and Sisterly Affection is home to some of the most stressed-out people in the nation, according to a new report from personal finance resource WalletHub. Philadelphia is ranked seventh in WalletHub's "Most and Least Stressed Cities in America" study – and is one of only two in the Mid-Atlantic region ranked in the top 20.

RHODE ISLAND Providence: The Rhode Island Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals union endorsed Gov. Dan McKee, delivering key organized labor support he is counting on for reelection. The union also endorsed Xay Khamsyvoravong for lieutenant governor and Keith Hoffmann for attorney general.

SOUTH CAROLINA Anderson: A cybersecurity attack has forced AnMed to close some offices and modify patient services as the Anderson-based health system works to recover from a network disruption caused by malware.

SOUTH DAKOTA Pierre: South Dakota became the sixth state to receive a Returning Education to the States waiver from the U.S. Education Department, allowing the state to consolidate more than $19 million in federal funds for state-level activities through 2029.

TENNESSEE Millington: Tennessee Baptist Children's Home has plans to improve its facilities in Millington through a $20 million project, including new housing as part of its larger Firm Foundations Project.

TEXAS Austin: Three years after Texas reinvented how community colleges earn state funding to reward them for getting more students to graduation, the schools are delivering. But the colleges are short the millions they planned to receive as their successes outpaced what lawmakers budgeted, The Texas Tribune reported. Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board officials adjusted the funding formula, trimming the incentives that trigger additional dollars when schools educate high-need students. Colleges will now see smaller bonuses for getting low-income students and adult learners to graduation, the news outlet reported.

UTAH St. George: Dixie Technical College received a $930,000 Lowe's Foundation grant to expand electrical, HVAC and plumbing training programs aimed at meeting workforce demands fueled by rapid population growth and infrastructure development, KSL reported.

VERMONT Montpelier: Gov. Phil Scott's approval continues to decline as he heads into his sixth election, a new poll from the University of New Hampshire Survey Center found. The poll found that 48% of Vermonters approve of Scott's handling of his job as governor, his lowest since the center began surveying Vermont in 2022.

VIRGINIA Waynesboro: Of the 52 speakers who came to Waynesboro High School to discuss Northrop Grumman on July 23, only one spoke in favor of the facility. The Virginia Department of Environmental Quality held the hearing to take public comment on the company's application for a state operating permit for a new facility.

WASHINGTON Seattle: Visit Seattle forecasts a 12% rise in Canadian visitors in 2026 as the city rebounds from a decline in international visitors the previous year, KOMO News reported.

WEST VIRGINIA Grantsville: The U.S. Department of Agriculture announced a $1.75 million investment to support construction and expansion projects at Minnie Hamilton Health System aimed at improving rural health care access and upgrading medical facilities, WV News reported.

WISCONSIN Milwaukee: Due to high community demand, Veritas High School, a public charter school in Milwaukee, plans to open a second campus. The organization's announcement said there is a high demand for the personalized approach the school will provide.

WYOMING Yellowstone National Park: A man fishing at Yellowstone National Park was saved from a lurking bison after his wife alerted him just in time. The July 19 incident comes a little over a week after a bison charged at and tossed a 65-year-old man into the air at the national park, seriously injuring him.

From USA TODAY Network and wire reports

Best electric SUVs of 2026 led by Tesla, Rivian, Kia

Charles Singh
Nashville Tennessean
USA TODAY NETWORK

Tesla's Model Y is the most popular EV in America. PROVIDED BY TESLA

Some of the most popular automakers, like Toyota, Ford, Tesla, and more, are producing capable electric SUVs for the American auto market. The best electric SUVs are models that are practical, easy to charge, and offer good value for the money.

We've tested several gas, hybrid, and electric SUVs for USA TODAY Cars in 2026, including best-selling models. Here are our top picks for the best electric SUVs of 2026 so far.

The best subcompact electric SUV: The 2026 Nissan Leaf

Nissan has completely redesigned the Leaf nameplate, transforming it into an affordable electric subcompact SUV for the 2026 model year. The Nissan Leaf is one of the most affordable new electric vehicles on the market and it has a strong value proposition.

The 2026 Nissan Leaf starts at $29,990. It has 303 miles of driving range, which is great for its price. The Leaf also comes with a built-in NACS, aka North American Charging Standard, port for DC fast charging.

The best small electric SUV: The 2026 Tesla Model Y

Tesla's Model Y compact electric SUV is the most popular EV in America for a reason. The Model Y is a sales hit that checks all the boxes for many drivers, and it's helping thousands of buyers make the switch from gas to electric vehicles in 2026. The 2026 Tesla Model Y starts at $39,990 before taxes and additional fees. It has 321 miles of standard driving range and it's no slouch on the highway. The Model Y has practical cabin and cargo space, and it charges quickly using Tesla Superchargers.

The best midsize electric SUV: The 2026 Kia EV9

The Kia EV9 takes several design cues from its gas sibling, the popular Kia Telluride. It's spacious, loaded with great standard tech, and comes in powerful upper trims with more driving range.

Kia's 2026 EV9 starts at $54,900. It has 230 miles of standard driving range and comes standard with a built-in NACS port. Car and Driver ranks the EV9 as the best in its segment because of its "blend of style and practicality."

The best full-size electric SUV: The 2026 Rivian R1S

Rivian may be producing a new smaller and more affordable SUV, but its first electric SUV remains competitive for those willing to look past its high starting price. We tested the 2026 Rivian R1S and it's easily one of the quickest electric vehicles drivers can buy for under $100,000. The Quad Motor trim rockets from 0-60 mph in 2.5 seconds.

The 2026 Rivian R1S starts at $83,990. It has 329 miles of standard driving range. The R1S is an off-roading machine with an adjustable air suspension.

It's incredibly quick and capable. Additionally, Rivian's software creates a unique driver experience allowing you to customize everything about your ride from ground clearance to sportiness.

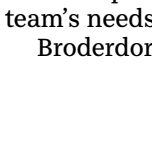
Rivian's full-size family SUV may not be cheap but its unique capabilities and specs make it worth the money for many drivers.

Jeep and Ram, Stellantis' top two brands, receive new CEOs in shake-up

Liam Rappleye
Detroit Free Press
USA TODAY NETWORK

Ram and Jeep are both welcoming new executive leaders, as now-former Jeep CEO Bob Broderdorf is stepping down after a cancer diagnosis, while Ram's departing CEO, Tim Kuniskis, is focusing on a larger job in the Stellantis company.

Broderdorf will be succeeded by Branden Coté, an automotive executive with experience at Mercedes-Benz, Aston Martin and several automotive analysis groups. Kuniskis, who has led a revival in sales for Ram, will be replaced by Matt VanDyke, who spent 14 years with Ford Motor Co. in a variety of roles, including chief marketing officer and the CEO of FordDirect, Ford's retail marketing and management arm.



Broderdorf

Coté

VanDyke

Since 2022, according to his LinkedIn profile, VanDyke has led an independent automotive marketing firm called Shift Digital.

Broderdorf, who has led Jeep since February 2025 after being appointed by Stellantis CEO Antonio Filosa, shared in a LinkedIn post that he was diagnosed with cancer and would be taking medical leave while a new executive fills his shoes.

"Recently, my life took an unexpected turn when I was diagnosed with cancer," Broderdorf wrote. "But with it, has come clarity and a lesson in priorities, perspective, and humility. One perspective has become impossible to ignore: sometimes the greatest act of leadership is knowing when to put the team's needs ahead of your own."

Broderdorf led Jeep while it refreshed its product lineup, launched several crafty marketing schemes and released an all-new EV off-road vehicle. Broderdorf and Stellantis both said that he will have a new leadership position at Stellantis when he returns from medical leave.

"I fully intend to come back stronger, healthier, and ready for whatever challenge comes next. And I am so grateful to Stellantis for preserving my chair while giving me the time I need to get back," Broderdorf wrote.

Kuniskis, on the other hand, is not leaving Stellantis, nor is he taking on a new job.

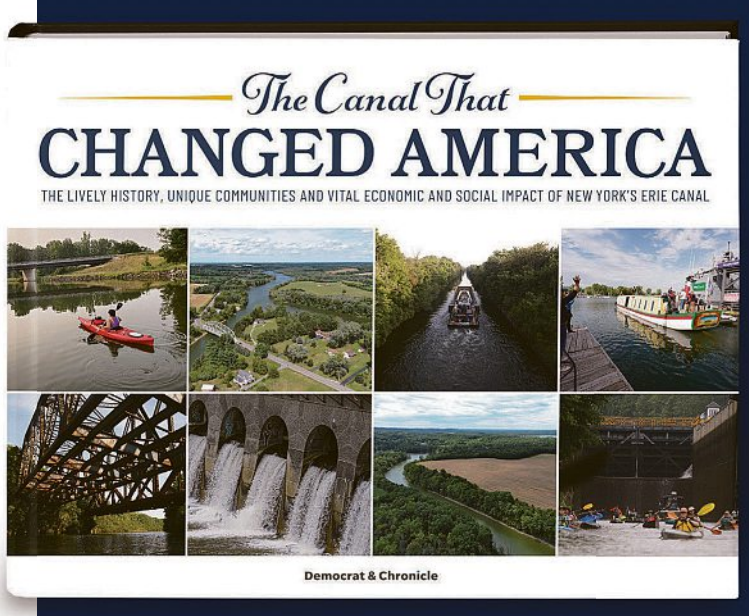
In fact, both VanDyke and Coté will report directly to him as he focuses on his role as head of all of Stellantis' North American brands (Chrysler, Dodge, Jeep, and Ram). Kuniskis has been the CEO of Ram while holding several other top leadership gigs at Stellantis for about a year.

Kuniskis sheds one of four roles he has held since July 2025: He was the CEO of Ram; he has been directing all of the automaker's North American brands; he has served as the head of the high-performance vehicle SRT division; and he has directed Stellantis' North American marketing and retail strategy.

The shuffle in leadership of Jeep and Ram is important for the automaker, which said in May those two brands would be central to the company's long-term play to regain market share and turn the company around. The automaker's new strategic plan, dubbed "FaSTLAne 2030," outlined how Ram and Jeep would receive most of the research and development funding, while Chrysler and Dodge would take a back seat.

Stellantis said in a news release that the addition of Coté and VanDyke is "part of Stellantis CEO Antonio Filosa's ongoing strategy to build a team of experienced executives who are well positioned to lead the company's growth plan."

Discover the history and beauty of the
Erie Canal
in a hardcover book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They called it "Clinton's Folly." Two centuries later, it looks like genius.

The Erie Canal moved goods, people and ideas across 363 miles of New York State, turning small towns into industrial cities and making New York City the country's busiest port. Along its banks, abolitionists organized, suffragists marched and utopian communities took root.

This hardcover book from the Democrat & Chronicle covers the canal's history from the towering lift locks at Little Falls to Lyons, the Peppermint Village, and features close to 100 photographs by photojournalist and kayaker Tina MacIntyre-Yee, captured across 60 miles of paddles in the canal's bicentennial year. Preorder today and save 20% off the cover price!

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British Open's 50-year journey from six pros to a women's major

AN EARNED PRESTIGE

Beth Ann Nichols Golfweek | USA TODAY Network

Laura Davies received two candlestick holders and 9,000 pounds when she won the 1986 Women's British Open. Only the Ladies Golf Union, back then, didn't offer a replica trophy, so Davies' mother and stepfather had one made for her birthday.

"Within touching distance as we speak," said 62-year-old Davies by phone of the prized silver candle holder she kindly polished up for a picture.

British golf writer Lewine Mair recalled a 22-year-old Davies walking into a crammed clubhouse at Birkdale after her four-stroke victory in search of a phone.

"She got into her car and dashed down the road to one of those red call boxes and rang her mother," said Mair, "before

See BRITISH OPEN, Page 4C

Clockwise from top: Laura Davies, Patty Sheehan, Karen Stupples and Georgia Hall GETTY IMAGES

Jarrett Bell
Columnist
USA TODAY

Bieniemy to rely on strength of family & Chiefs

All of a sudden, football is on the back burner for Eric Bieniemy.

Real life trumps that every time.

Imagine the shock for Bieniemy, who returned this year to his old job as the Kansas City Chiefs offensive coordinator, contacted at training camp on the night of July 26 with the horrible news: His wife, Mia, was shot multiple times at their home in Northern Virginia.

Thank God, Mia, 57, who is being treated for what authorities described as "serious injuries," was in stable condition on Monday.

The tragedy is compounded, though, with the arrest of their oldest son, Elijah, held without bond and facing three felony charges.

Real life. It puts football in perspective.

"Eric will work through it," Chiefs coach Andy Reid told reporters following a rookie camp practice on Monday.

See BELL, Page 4C

Andy Reid, left, and Eric Bieniemy, shown in 2021, can relate on real-life issues involving family members.
JAY BIGGERSTAFF/IMAGN IMAGES

Blake Toppmeyer
Columnist
USA TODAY NETWORK

Nine-game SEC sked loathed by the coaches in the league

At a time when college football seems so irrevocably divided, SEC football coaches are united in crying about a nine-game conference schedule.

Nothing bands men in headsets together like digesting the reality that they'll have one fewer cupcake opponent.

Even coaches who used to support a nine-game conference schedule, like Missouri's Eliah Drinkwitz, have grown skeptical of it now that it's here. Drinkwitz told reporters at SEC media days in Tampa, Florida, that coaches are having some buyer's remorse to the SEC adding an additional league game.

"We're all saying it," Drinkwitz said.

They regret it, even before experiencing it or seeing how it'll play out or how it'll affect the College Football Playoff pursuits of their teams.

SEC Commissioner Greg Sankey wanted this ninth game. He persuaded university presidents and chancellors to approve it. The coaches in Sankey's

See TOPPMEYER, Page 4C

UFL players head to NFL camps seeking a step up for 2026

Jacob Camenker
USA TODAY

NFL training camps are opening up, and with it comes battles for positions on each team's 53-man roster.

Plenty of those spots will go to grizzled NFL veterans, but there will be players hoping to make the jump from the UFL.

Entering training camp, 23 UFL players had signed contracts with NFL teams. They will look to become the latest spring league standouts to make it onto rosters and develop into key role players, like Dallas Cowboys wide receiver KaVontae Turpin and kicker Brandon Aubrey.

Which players have the best chance? A look at five former UFL players who could challenge for roster spots in 2026.

The Louisville Kings' Ian Wheeler tries to make it 1 yard to score a TD vs. the Birmingham Stallions on March 27.
SCOTT UTTERBACK/COURIER JOURNAL

1. Tanner Brown

- **Position**: Kicker
- **Team**: New Orleans Saints

Historically, the biggest NFL contributors to come out of spring football leagues have been special teams players. Aubrey and Jake Bates have turned into two of the NFL's best kickers, and Brown will look to become the latest in the UFL to NFL kicker pipeline.

Brown made 89% of his field goals in 2026, good for the second-highest mark among kickers with at least 10 field-goal attempts, and made a league-high 25 field goals. He showed good range with a long of 60 and earned the UFL's Special Teams Player of the Year award as a result of his strong effort.

Brown will compete with Charlie Smyth – who made 12 of 16 field goals across six games for the Saints last year.

2. Major Burns

- **Position**: Safety
- **Team**: Miami Dolphins

Burns was tremendous in his first season with the Houston Gamblers. The former LSU safety led the UFL with four interceptions while allowing a minuscule 29.4 passer rating in coverage, per Pro Football Focus. The imposing safety also has great size at 6-foot-2, 207 pounds, which should help him hold up as a role player at the NFL level.

Burns landed in a great situation with the Dolphins, who are rebuilding and don't have much proven talent at safety. That could give Burns a path toward making the roster, especially if he can continue to show off quality ball hawk skills in the preseason.

3. Ian Wheeler

- **Position**: Running back
- **Team**: Buffalo Bills

Wheeler made one start for the Louisville Kings last season but he emerged as the team's top running back amid its run to a UFL title. The physical runner showed good burst and averaged an impressive 5.4 yards per carry, which ranked second-best league-wide among qualified runners behind only Marcus Yarns (5.7).

Wheeler also averaged 28.5 yards per kick return last season, which ranked fifth in the UFL. That will give him multiple paths to earning a roster spot with the Bills, who have a solid rotation set at running back with James Cook, Ray Davis and Ty Johnson but just five total running backs on their 53-man roster.

4. Hakeem Butler

- **Position**: Wide receiver
- **Team**: Denver Broncos

Butler led the UFL in receiving yards last season with 641 while averaging a whopping 22.1 yards per reception. That came despite him playing in just nine games and helped him to earn the UFL's Offensive Player of the Year award for the second time in three years.

Butler's size (6-foot-5) makes him a good contested-catch weapon option. It has not fully come together for Butler across his three previous NFL stints (including appearing in two games with the Eagles in 2020), but there is a way the 30-year-old could make an impact in Sean Payton's offense as a situational red-zone threat.

5. Sean Fresch Jr.

- **Position**: Cornerback/returner
- **Team**: Denver Broncos

Butler isn't the only Broncos signee who could pan out. Fresch could find himself a role on the roster, though it will more likely come on special teams than on defense.

Fresch logged a solid 33 tackles and two sacks on defense across 10 games (two starts) for the St. Louis Battlehawks. That said, the 5-foot-9, 181-pound defensive back was more impressive on special teams, where he averaged an impressive 10.4 yards per punt return on 32 returns.

Fresch's return skills give him versatility that could prove valuable in the modern NFL given the game's increased emphasis on special teams.

It may not be likely for Fresch to beat Marvin Mims Jr. – who averaged 15.6 yards per punt return last season, second-best in the NFL – for the main punt returner job, but Payton could value having extra returner depth.

Full list of UFL to NFL players for 2026

A total of 23 players have made the jump from the UFL to NFL training camps in 2026. Here is the full list:

Atlanta Falcons
- Keshawn Banks, DE, Orlando Storm
- Devonnsha Maxwell, DL, DC Defenders
- Antwane Wells, WR, Columbus Aviators

Buffalo Bills
- Ian Wheeler, RB, Louisville Kings

Chicago Bears
- Kaden Davis, WR, Houston Gamblers
- Tony Fields II, LB, Columbus Aviators

Dallas Cowboys
- Chris Glaser, OL, Columbus Aviators
- Denzel Mims, WR, Dallas Renegades
- Ameer Speed, CB, Houston Gamblers

Denver Broncos
- Hakeem Butler, WR, St. Louis Battlehawks
- Sean Fresch Jr., CB/KR/PR, St. Louis Battlehawks

Detroit Lions
- Tarik Black, WR, Louisville Kings
- Lucky Jackson, WR, Louisville Kings
- Lawrence Keys III, WR, Houston Gamblers
- Tay Martin, WR, Columbus Aviators

Miami Dolphins
- Gottlieb Ayedze, OT, Houston Gamblers
- Major Burns, S, Houston Gamblers

New Orleans Saints
- Tanner Brown, K, Louisville Kings
- Hunter Dekkers, QB, Houston Gamblers
- Jalen Moreno-Cropper, WR, Houston Gamblers

Philadelphia Eagles
- Erik Ezukanma, WR, DC Defenders
- Shaun Wade, CB, Dallas Renegades

Pittsburgh Steelers
- Jacoby Windmon, DE, Columbus Aviators

FOR THE RECORD

All times ET

MLB

American League
East Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Tampa Bay	62	43	.590	–
N.Y. Yankees	60	46	.566	2½
Boston	55	50	.524	7
Baltimore	52	55	.486	11
Toronto	49	58	.458	14

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Chi. White Sox	55	50	.524	–
Cleveland	54	53	.505	2
Minnesota	53	54	.495	3
Detroit	50	57	.467	6
Kansas City	45	62	.421	11

West Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Texas	54	52	.509	–
Houston	53	55	.491	2
Seattle	52	55	.486	2½
Athletics	44	62	.415	10
L.A. Angels	42	65	.393	12½

National League
East Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Atlanta	62	44	.585	–
Philadelphia	57	50	.533	5½
Washington	54	53	.505	8½
Miami	53	54	.495	9½
N.Y. Mets	45	62	.421	17½

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Milwaukee	66	40	.623	–
Chicago Cubs	60	46	.566	6
Pittsburgh	55	52	.514	11½
St. Louis	53	53	.500	13
Cincinnati	49	55	.471	16

West Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
L.A. Dodgers	67	39	.632	–
Arizona	55	52	.514	12½
San Diego	53	53	.500	14
San Francisco	45	61	.425	22
Colorado	42	65	.393	25½

Monday's Scores
Texas 7, Seattle 3
Baltimore 8, Detroit 5
Miami 8, Philadelphia 7
Pittsburgh 3, Arizona 2
Toronto 3, Washington 2
Cleveland at Cincinnati, PPD Rain
N.Y. Mets 14, Atlanta 3
N.Y. Yankees 9, Chi. White Sox 5
Chicago Cubs 7, St. Louis 3
Houston 6, L.A. Angels 4
Boston 4, Athletics 2
San Francisco 3, Milwaukee 0

Tuesday's Games
Cleveland at Cincinnati
Baltimore at Detroit
Texas at Tampa Bay
Philadelphia at Miami
Arizona at Pittsburgh
Toronto at Washington
Cleveland at Cincinnati
Atlanta at N.Y. Mets
N.Y. Yankees at Chi. White Sox
Kansas City at Minnesota
Chicago Cubs at St. Louis
Houston at L.A. Angels
Boston at Athletics
Colorado at San Diego
Milwaukee at San Francisco
Seattle at L.A. Dodgers

Wednesday's Games
Philadelphia at Miami, 12:10 p.m.
Arizona at Pittsburgh, 12:35 p.m.
Toronto at Washington, 1:05 p.m.
Baltimore at Detroit, 1:10 p.m.
Atlanta at N.Y. Mets, 1:10 p.m.
Milwaukee at San Francisco, 3:45 p.m.
Colorado at San Diego, 4:10 p.m.
Texas at Tampa Bay, 6:40 p.m.
Cleveland at Cincinnati, 7:10 p.m.
N.Y. Yankees at Chi. White Sox, 7:40 p.m.
Kansas City at Minnesota, 7:40 p.m.
Chicago Cubs at St. Louis, 7:45 p.m.
Houston at L.A. Angels, 9:38 p.m.
Boston at Athletics, 9:40 p.m.
Seattle at L.A. Dodgers, 10:10 p.m.

Thursday's Games
Texas at Tampa Bay, 12:10 p.m.
Kansas City at Minnesota, 1:40 p.m.
N.Y. Yankees at Chi. White Sox, 2:10 p.m.
Chicago Cubs at St. Louis, 2:15 p.m.
Pittsburgh at Cincinnati, 7:10 p.m.
Miami at N.Y. Mets, 7:10 p.m.
Washington at Atlanta, 7:15 p.m.
Boston at Athletics, 9:40 p.m.
San Francisco at San Diego, 9:40 p.m.
Seattle at L.A. Dodgers, 10:10 p.m.

WNBA

Eastern Conference

	W	L	Pct	GB
Indiana	17	10	.630	–
Atlanta	16	10	.615	½
N.Y. Liberty	15	12	.556	2
Washington	14	12	.538	2½
Toronto	10	16	.385	6½
Chicago Sky	9	18	.333	8
Connecticut	7	20	.259	10

Western Conference

	W	L	Pct	GB
Minnesota	22	6	.786	–
Golden State	19	8	.704	2½
Las Vegas	18	8	.692	3
Dallas	18	9	.667	3½
Portland	11	16	.407	10½
L.A. Sparks	10	16	.385	11
Phoenix	10	18	.357	12
Seattle	6	23	.207	16½

Tuesday's Games
Connecticut at Washington
Toronto at Minnesota
Indiana at Seattle
Portland at Las Vegas
N.Y. Liberty at L.A. Sparks

Wednesday's Games
Atlanta at Dallas, 8 p.m.
Golden State at Phoenix, 10 p.m.

Thursday's Games
Minnesota vs Toronto at Toronto, 8 p.m.
Connecticut at Chicago Sky, 8 p.m.
N.Y. Liberty at Las Vegas, 10 p.m.

SOCCER

MLS
EASTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Nashville	12	2	3	39	33	12
Inter Miami CF	11	2	4	37	43	30
New England	9	5	2	29	26	19
Chicago	8	6	2	26	30	22
NY City FC	7	6	4	25	30	23
Charlotte FC	7	6	4	25	28	25
Cincinnati	6	6	5	23	41	42
NY Red Bulls	6	7	4	22	26	37
D.C. United	5	5	7	22	24	27
Orlando City	6	9	2	20	28	44
Columbus	5	8	4	19	24	26
Toronto FC	3	7	7	16	23	31
CF Montreal	4	10	3	15	22	33
Philadelphia	3	10	4	13	22	31
Atlanta	3	11	3	12	17	30

WESTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Vancouver	10	3	3	33	37	16
Los Angeles FC	10	5	3	33	34	18
San Jose	10	4	3	33	35	20
Real Salt Lake	8	6	2	26	28	24
Houston	8	6	2	26	23	24
FC Dallas	7	5	5	26	32	25
Saint Louis	7	6	4	25	23	23
Seattle	7	6	3	24	19	20
Minnesota	6	6	5	23	19	24
Portland	6	8	3	21	31	32
LA Galaxy	5	7	6	21	24	29
San Diego FC	5	7	5	20	31	28
Colorado	6	10	1	19	26	25
Austin FC	4	8	5	17	22	35
Sporting KC	4	11	2	14	18	44

Note: Three points for win, one point for tie.

Wednesday's Game
MLS All-Stars vs Liga MX All-Stars at Charlotte, 8 p.m.

Friday's Game
Toronto FC at NY City FC, 7:30 p.m.

NWSL

	W	L	D	Pts	GF	GA
Washington	10	3	3	33	25	12
Gotham	9	3	4	31	21	12
Utah	9	4	3	30	26	17
San Diego	9	6	2	29	23	19
Portland	8	5	4	28	27	20
Kansas City	8	7	1	25	23	23
Orlando	7	8	2	23	22	21
Angel City	7	7	1	22	23	16
North Carolina	6	6	3	21	21	23
Seattle	6	7	2	20	17	19
Denver	5	6	4	19	21	20
Houston	5	7	4	19	19	24
Boston	5	8	4	19	18	23
Bay	5	7	3	18	16	20
Chicago	4	12	0	12	8	31
Louisville	3	10	2	11	18	28

Note: Three points for win, one point for tie.

Wednesday's Games
Louisville at Kansas City, 8 p.m.
Washington at Utah, 9 p.m.
Gotham at Bay, 10 p.m.

Friday's Game
Orlando at North Carolina, 8 p.m.

Saturday's Games
Chicago at Louisville, 4 p.m.
Angel City at Kansas City, 6:30 p.m.
Gotham at Houston, 8 p.m.
Seattle at Bay, 8:45 p.m.

Sports Weekly

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GOOD VIBES
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On newsstands: Entering training camp, we rank all 32 NFL teams based on current vibes. Who is feeling the best? Plus, from quarterback battles in Atlanta and Minnesota to defensive overhauls in Dallas and Baltimore, here's one thing to watch at every NFL training camp. In baseball, Hall of Fame inductee Jeff Kent talks about his stint on a reality TV show. How is the mentality like his on-field persona? In NBA, did LeBron James make the right move going to the Sixers? Where does Philadelphia rank in the Eastern Conference after signing him? Plus, from Pete Rose to Moses Malone to Reggie White to James, what are the best Philadelphia sports signings? We rank them. As always, we have MLB stats, power rankings and box scores. You can order the edition at onlinestore.usatoday.com and subscribe to the magazine by going to mysportsweekly.com or by calling 800-872-1415.

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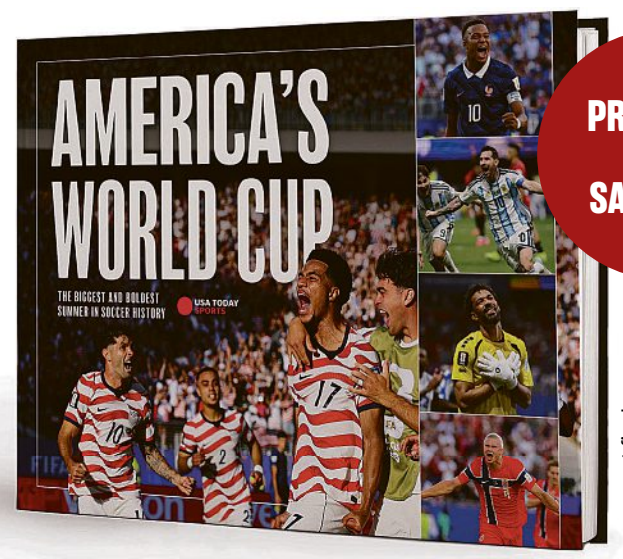

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North Carolina program a wild mess

Matt Hayes
College football columnist
USA TODAY NETWORK

Bill Belichick was 4-8 in his first season as the North Carolina Tar Heels' football coach. JARED C. TILTON/GETTY IMAGES

We're focusing on the wrong people here, everyone. At the wrong time, and in the wrong moment with the never-ending mess at North Carolina.

Bill Belichick was an out-of-work football coach no one wanted.

Michael Lombardi was an out-of-work former NFL personnel executive no one wanted.

And Lee Roberts and John Preyer – arguably the two most powerful men in the state of North Carolina – decided to go all in with all involved in December 2024. To save a North Carolina football program that didn't necessarily need saving, it needed tweaking.

So they threw $30 million guaranteed at a football coach, and tens of millions more in name, image and likeness cash so he and his handpicked general manager could execute the worst roster rebuild in the NIL era. Without a hint of oversight.

Nearly 20 months later, all UNC has to show for it is four wins and abject humiliation. The latest embarrassment: Lombardi's suspension from the program July 27 for an alleged human resources complaint filed by a former UNC front office employee, ESPN reported.

This is what happens when you get academia blowhards involved in the hiring and firing of coaches. They deal in fandom, not an athletic director's real world, nut-cutting reality of this hire could get me fired.

Forget about due diligence or background checks or social media scrubs, how about simply calling one of 32 NFL owners and asking why Belichick and Lombardi were persona non grata.

Why a man with six Super Bowl rings as head coach of the New England Patriots couldn't get a job in the league he owned for two decades. Why a personnel executive hadn't worked in the NFL since leaving the Patriots in 2016, and had a GM role once – and was fired 13 months later.

Why Jordan Hudson, a then 24-year-old former beauty pageant contestant, was tagging along with the coach and his six rings because the coach believed she was his "muse."

I mean, my god. That alone – excluding the reality that no one in the NFL wanted Belichick and Lombardi – should've been a massive red flag whipping in the wind, begging North Carolina to walk away from the train wreck waiting to happen.

Want to blame someone for the off Broadway disaster of Beli, Lombardi and The Muse? Blame Roberts, the chancellor at UNC, and Preyer, then the chairman of the powerful UNC-Chapel Hill board of trustees.

These two stalwarts of academia pushed aside North Carolina athletic director Bubba Cunningham – who wanted to hire then-Iowa State coach Matt Campbell – and declared they were running the show. Or search committee.

This is what they got for their fandom.

Preyer left the board in January, leaving Roberts to hold this humiliating bag of steaming puke. The only way Roberts and Belichick survive is if Belichick has somehow figured it out after stumbling through his now second roster rebuild.

That's right, a year after Belichick and Lombardi signed 70 new players (high school recruiting and transfer portal) in 2025, they signed 60 more for 2026. I'm no math major, but that's a rather large percentage of misses from the first class that made up the "33rd Team" – Lombardi and Belichick's declaration that UNC would be the 33rd NFL team.

Utterly laughable.

Belichick and Lombardi fielded a team in 2025 that won two ACC games: one against lowly Stanford and interim coach Frank Reich, and the other against a Syracuse team that was using a lacrosse player at quarterback because there was no other healthy option on the roster. And still led 10-6 at halftime.

Belichick and Lombardi fielded a team that lost to in-state rivals Duke, NC State and Wake Forest in the same season for the first time since 1989. A team whose only other wins were against FCS Richmond and Group of Five Charlotte.

But Roberts and Preyer got their men. Got the coach with the Super Bowl rings, and his general manager – neither of whom had any modern-day college roster building experience.

They got Belichick and his embarrassing muse, and got Lombardi and an embarrassing human resources complaint. They got a 25-year-old competitive cheerleader sending Freedom of Information Act requests all over the university, desperately trying to find who leaked information that she was not allowed in the football building because of all the drama she created.

I ask you, what could go wrong with circumventing the athletic director and hiring people *no one wanted* at a critical point in the evolution of the North Carolina football program?

Ask Preyer and Roberts. This mess is on them.

Matt Hayes is the senior national college football writer for USA TODAY Sports Network. Follow him on X at @MattHayesCFB

Patriots embark on road back to Super Bowl

Chris Bumbaca
USA TODAY

Patriots coach Mike Vrabel watches over practice during minicamp at Gillette Stadium on June 10. ERIC CANHA/IMAGN IMAGES VIA REUTERS CONNECT

Finally, it's back to football for Mike Vrabel and the New England Patriots.

Veterans reported to the facility on July 24 for the unofficial start of training camp, with the first practice set for the next day.

It's been a long offseason for New England, which won the AFC championship game last season. But much has happened since the drubbing the Patriots received from the Seattle Seahawks in Super Bowl 60.

"When you don't have a lot of expectations, you can't be disappointed," head coach Mike Vrabel told reporters in June. "I just felt like there hasn't been much complacency. I think the guys have worked. We've had great leadership, added some good leaders and good pieces, and we are continuing to build and hopefully prepare for a long journey."

Here are five questions that will be top of mind for the Patriots as they begin camp.

What does growth look like for quarterback Drake Maye in Josh McDaniels' offense?

In 2025, Drake Maye finished second in the MVP race in his second professional season. The arrival of Josh McDaniels as New England's offensive coordinator under Mike Vrabel was vital for Maye's development. Maye and the offense had to learn an entirely new scheme a year ago.

Developing a mastery of it is his new task.

"It's just naturally night and day from last year this time. I was trying to get things right, trying to get guys knowing where I was making calls and getting guys lined up," Maye said during OTAs. "Now we're just taking the next steps."

During spring practices, McDaniels and the offensive staff challenged Maye by occasionally having him break the huddle with less than 20 seconds remaining and no play called. It was Maye's job to diagnose the defense and put the team in the proper play from the line of scrimmage.

Making the correct decision within the first few seconds of the snap of the ball has been a point of emphasis for the 2024 No. 3 overall pick.

"Knowing sometimes incompletions are the best plays, not trying to hold the ball too long and get out of the habit of really trying to extend plays just because I feel like I haven't extended a play in a while," Maye explained.

With Maye eligible for an extension following this season, there is no time like the present for the Patriots.

Can wide receiver A.J. Brown take the offense to the next level?

The Patriots made it to the Super Bowl minus any bona fide stars at the skill positions on offense. Bringing in a player of A.J. Brown's caliber, via a June 1 trade with the Philadelphia Eagles in which the Patriots parted with a 2028 first-round pick, was an acknowledgment that doing so again would be difficult.

Brown has gone for more than a thousand receiving yards in six of his seven pro seasons, including the last four in Philadelphia. The Patriots had one receiver, Stefon Diggs, who had more than a thousand yards (1,013), last year. Brown's physicality and production have been welcomed by the guy responsible for giving him the ball.

"It's really just on me to give him a chance to touch it, because more times than not, he's going to bring it in," Maye said. "That's exciting. Just knowing that a slant or something, a quick out, something that you can just give him the ball, he can go and break some tackles."

Brown's ties to Vrabel from Tennessee means he knows what is expected of him as a veteran leader in the locker room.

Will Christian Gonzalez's contract extension negotiations be handled swiftly?

Gonzalez, the last first-round pick made by Bill Belichick (17th overall, 2023 draft), is eligible for an extension. He sat out the early parts of the Patriots offseason program but attended mandatory minicamp in a show of good faith. Gonzalez – named second-team All-Pro in 2024 and to the Pro Bowl in 2025 – is already considered a top-tier corner in the game, and the expectation is that his next contract will reflect that. He's said he wants the deal to be done prior to the start of the season.

Gonzalez, asked if it mattered to him to set the market for cornerback contracts, replied: "That's another question that is between my agents and the Patriots and that team and what they value me at."

The 24-year-old said it was still early in the offseason. But that was during minicamp. Time is ticking.

How long does wideout Kayshon Boutte last?

The "X" receiver role – the player who often goes vertical in the route tree – is now filled primarily by Brown. Boutte, who caught six touchdowns on just 46 targets and 33 catches, is a viable trade candidate for the Patriots. But no deal was struck for the fourth-year wideout during the draft or to this point of the offseason. Maye appreciates him as a target, and maybe there is a future in which Boutte does not have to leave to shine. But that feels unlikely, making it a matter of when, and not if, Boutte is dealt to a team that could better use his services.

Boutte was the team's third-leading receiver behind Diggs and tight end Hunter Henry.

Will higher expectations have any effect on Patriots?

Nobody a year ago expected the Patriots to be playing in the Super Bowl. They might not be a sexy pick this year, either, but the point is that the 2025 Patriots demonstrated that the organization could rectify its ways in short order. The schedule, based on strength of victory and other metrics, proved easier than the average path to a Super Bowl.

Toppmeyer

Continued from Page 1C

league didn't want this.

"It will challenge our teams," Sankey said. "It will prepare them for the highest level of competition. It reflects who we are as a conference."

Try telling that to the league's coaches, a profession that specializes in airing grievances.

"If we keep playing each other, we don't prove we're better than anyone else," LSU's Lane Kiffin said from the pulpit at media days, tripling down on his opposition to a ninth SEC game.

Here's what SEC coaches won't say

SEC coaches would rather play against Southwest Cupcake State than face an extra game against the likes of Kentucky or Mississippi State or Auburn or Florida.

I get it. Wins help job security. Losses hurt job security. That's easy to understand.

Also, although it's untrue that the Playoff committee doesn't value strength of schedule and looks only at record – how else to explain 10-3 Alabama getting a bid over 11-2 BYU? – it's true you're better off going 12-1 against a meek schedule than 9-3 against a rugged slate.

But, here's what SEC coaches won't say: The CFP selection committee respects (and always has respected) the SEC more than any other conference. In two years of the 12-team Playoff, the SEC garnered eight bids, the most of any conference.

This ninth conference game will provide another valuable data point for the selection committee and help the committee more effectively determine which teams are the top four or five teams in the SEC.

As long as the Playoff continues in this 12-team format, the SEC likely will average about four bids a year. That won't substantially change whether the conference plays eight or nine conference games.

So, if you're going to receive about four bids per year, shouldn't you at least try to ensure you're getting your four best teams from the conference into the bracket?

That's what this extra conference game will do. It will boost the chances that the three or four or five SEC teams that earn a bid are actually the three or four or five best teams from the SEC.

Coaches are among the first to complain about the committee, but they don't want to do the thing that'll help the committee do its job. That's playing more relevant games and fewer cupcakes.

A ninth SEC game will add clarity to league standings

When the SEC expanded to 16 teams, it initially stayed with an eight-game conference schedule. That meant each team faced only half of its conference peers. That made it difficult to determine an accurate hierarchy. The standings and records were undeniably influenced by a team's schedule draw. An extra conference game won't eliminate that, but it at least will add some clarity.

The more conference games you play, the more you separate the wheat from the chaff.

Think about it: If every team played 12 cupcakes and no legitimate opponents, the committee would have a tough time determining the best teams from a particular conference. If every team played exclusively conference games, it becomes much easier to determine a league's pecking order.

Short of an SEC breakaway or another pandemic, the SEC isn't going to play an SEC-only schedule. But the more conference games teams play, the easier it is to determine an accurate hierarchy.

Here's the other thing most coaches don't say: A ninth SEC game will enhance the product for the people who pay the bills (and pay the salaries) – that's the media partners and the fans.

If ESPN wanted more games like Chattanooga vs. Alabama, trust me, there'd be no ninth conference game. Television partners want conference clashes or marquee nonconference battles. They don't want games that'll be 31-0 by halftime.

Maybe coaches shouldn't care about what ESPN wants, but shouldn't an SEC coach want the four SEC teams that make the Playoff to actually be the best four SEC teams? This extra conference game will boost the chances of that happening.

Blake Toppmeyer is the USA TODAY Network's senior national college football columnist. Email him at BToppmeyer@gannett.com and follow him on X @btoppmeyer

British Open

Continued from Page 1C

the prize-giving, if I recall."

The Women's British Open was 10 years old at that point and had already been on the verge of collapse after failing to find a sponsor in 1983.

Davies' victory marked a turning point for the once vulnerable event. This year at Royal Lytham & St Annes the championship celebrates its 50th anniversary. While the Women's British has carried the prestige of a major since 2001, the feel of the event – from staging to prize funds to venue – has reached unprecedented heights since the R&A took control in 2017 and brought AIG on as title sponsor in 2019.

When England's Georgia Hall won at Royal Lytham in 2018, the purse was $3.25 million. It has since more than tripled to $10 million.

That is light years from the first edition in 1976, when two pros – Vivian Saunders and Gwen Brandom – put up part of the prize fund of 500 pounds to help turn the British Ladies Stroke Play into an event for professionals.

"It was very much like most of the amateur events that I'd played in," said England's Jenny Lee-Smith, who won the inaugural event while still an amateur. "I think there was only a half dozen pros playing ... no leaderboards, no scorers. The [Fulford] ladies club members pulled our trollies."

An official program from the event notes there were five pros, and England's Saunders, who got her money back, won the second edition in 1977.

The British pantyhose maker, Pretty Polly, was the event's first title sponsor from 1979 to 1982. After the tournament was canceled in 1983, Hitachi came to the rescue and the Tokyo conglomerate was rewarded with an 11-stroke victory by Japanese star Ayako Okomoto, who would eventually be inducted into the World Golf Hall of Fame. Another eventual Hall of Famer, Betsy King, won the 1985 edition and then, after Davies delighted the home crowd, Weetabix came on board, marking the beginning of a long and stable run.

Patty Sheehan isn't sure how the idea of her playing in the British Open came about in 1992, but after winning the U.S. Women's Open, she was about sixth on the alternate list to play at Woburn. She got into the field the week prior to the event and arrived in England with no clubs and no suitcase. She bought replacements for everything and borrowed the assistant pro's clubs, which were four swing weights heavier, for the practice rounds.

Sheehan's clubs and clothes arrived in time for the first round, and she went on win by three strokes.

"It was the first and only time that a person has won the U.S. [Women's]

Sherri Steinhauer walks the 18th fairway as she wins the Women's British Open at Royal Lytham St Annes in 2006. GLENN CAMPBELL/AFP VIA GETTY

Open and British Open in the same year," said Sheehan. "I think that's the only record I hold."

In 1994, the event became part of the LPGA schedule, and Karrie Webb won the first of three British Open titles in 1995 by six strokes.

The only other player to win three British Open titles is Wisconsin's Sherri Steinhauer, who went back-to-back in 1998 and 1999 before winning it in 2006 at Lytham, for a second time, as a major.

The first time at Lytham, Steinhauer walked the golf course backward so that she could get a better view of all the bunkers, a tactic she'd read about somewhere. Steinhauer, for the record, didn't go in a single fairway bunker in 1998. The weather was so horrendous that week that she won it despite an opening 9-over 81.

Steinhauer's run at the British was so charmed, in fact, that after she won her first title, her hotel bill was mysteriously paid for the next four years.

In 2001, Se Ri Pak won the first British Open that was designated a major championship. The move came after the du Maurier Classic lost its title sponsor when changes were made to tobacco regulations. In 2002, the event was held outside England for the first time, with Webb winning her third title at Turnberry.

For Karen Stupples, the British Open was the pinnacle of championship golf, the only big event she followed as a kid growing up in the coastal town of Deal. When Stupples started the final round at Sunningdale in 2004 with an eagle followed by an albatross, the closing 64 won her the title that changed her life.

"I always think that sometimes things are just meant to happen," said Stupples. "I come from a family that's always worked really hard and always struggled to have nice things. This was the universe's way of giving my family and me a little something back, and what it did was, it turned my life around. I was able to do things for my family that I would've never done before, financially, and it's given me a life after golf. I'm not sure that I would be talking about golf on TV had I not won that – a major championship."

In 2007, world No. 1 Lorena Ochoa won the first women's professional event ever staged over the Old Course at St Andrews. Ochoa opened with a bogey-free, bunker-free, course-record 6-under 67 and never relented, winning by four.

A current or former No. 1 player has won all three editions of the Women's British Open at St Andrews, with Stacy Lewis (2013) and Lydia Ko (2024) following suit. The 2007 edition also marked the start of Ricoh's important run as title sponsor, which lasted until 2018.

Scotland's Catriona Matthew famously became the first Scot to win the British in 2009, 11 weeks after giving birth to her second daughter, Sophie.

Over the next 15 years the championship was held at four traditional men's Open venues for the first time: Carnoustie (2011), Royal Liverpool (2012), Royal Troon (2020) and Muirfield (2022).

The most recent British player to win the British Open was Hall at Royal Lytham & St Annes in 2018. The first Brit to win the British Girls, British Ladies Amateur and Women's British Open, a 22-year-old Hall drew impressive crowds on a flawless day.

A 30-year-old Hall returns this week after giving birth to son Connor back in February, hoping to channel some of Matthew's magic.

It's never been harder, however, to win at home. From 2016 to 2024, players from nine countries hoisted the British Open trophy.

It's been 23 years since Annika Sorenstam completed the career Grand Slam with a one-shot victory over Se Ri Pak at Royal Lytham and St Annes. This week, world No. 1 Nelly Korda has a chance to do the same. Korda won the first two majors of the season, claiming her fourth career major title at the U.S. Women's Open at Riviera. Her best finish at the British is a share of second two years ago at the Old Course.

When Stupples walked down the 18th at Lytham as an on-course reporter eight years ago, she relived her own British Open victory as she listened to the home crowd call out Georgia Hall's name.

The moment wasn't just about Hall, of course, it was about the seeds that were planted for young British girls, just as they were for Stupples when she read about Davies' triumph at Birkdale in The Telegraph 40 years ago.

"The next thing you know, you've got a whole crop of new players ready to take on those challenges," said Stupples. "They all want to be part of her greatness and part of that dream – and that's why you do it."

With two Brits, Lottie Woad and Charley Hull, in the top 10 in the world, and a strong infrastructure in place for up-and-comers, Stupples believes British golf has never been healthier.

That, of course, includes the health of the home major, a global force that has come a long way since five pros played for 500 pounds 50 years ago.

Bell

Continued from Page 1C

"He has a great support group here, as does his family, as needed. And then we'll just let time take care of it from there."

Bieniemy, 56, obviously is on leave of absence with no attached timetable.

Never mind that the Chiefs veterans were set to report to the training camp at Missouri Western State University on July 28. The work of retooling the offense while star quarterback Patrick Mahomes recovers from knee surgery will proceed without Bieniemy – and be there whenever he comes back. Joe Bleymaier, the passing game coordinator in his 10th season on Reid's staff, will handle offensive coordinator duties while Bieniemy is away.

"On these things, real life," Reid added. "So, you take care of that, and that becomes important."

I don't think there is a head coach in the NFL more sensitive to the crisis that has enveloped Bieniemy than Reid. In 2012, when Reid coached the Philadelphia Eagles, his training camp was rocked when his oldest son, Garrett, who worked for the team as an assistant strength and conditioning coach, was found dead in his dorm room of a heroin overdose. In 2021, Reid's other son, Britt, was involved in a crash that left a girl, Ariel Young, in a coma for 11 days, among other injuries. It led to a DUI conviction and three-year sentence (which was later commuted) for the son who at the time worked as the Chiefs linebackers coach.

So, when Reid opened up Monday in speaking about Bieniemy's situation, it was wrapped with the compassion of someone who has walked in similar shoes of dealing with real-life crisis. Reid's experiences undoubtedly add a layer of support and a resource for Bieniemy that could be invaluable.

"We all love E.B. and you hate seeing these things happen," Reid said, "but there's a blessing in there somewhere. And so, I know things will work out."

Watching Reid's news conference reminded me of a specific point that Bieniemy made during our conversation in St. Joseph, Missouri, on July 25, following the Chiefs' first camp practice. In returning to the team after three years – he spent a season with the Washington Commanders, with the team's Loudoun County, Virginia, headquarters near the home where the tragedy unfolded, followed by one-season stints at UCLA and with the Chicago Bears – he maintained that reuniting with Reid and the Chiefs felt like coming home.

He spent 10 seasons on Reid's staff with the Chiefs in his previous stint, including the last five as offensive coordinator, but left to theoretically improve his chances of becoming an NFL head coach.

"The one thing you learn, it ain't necessarily where you work, but more importantly, *who* you work with," Bieniemy told USA TODAY Sports in an exclusive interview. "Do not get me wrong: All of those opportunities that I've had – great experiences, great organizations – I had the time of my life working for them. But when you become part of a family that you know from top to bottom, and you're treated like family, you have a tendency to miss what you were a part of."

Family. It sure sounded like that type of connection, too, as Reid spoke.

"Mia is stable, which is a plus," Reid said. "And so is Eric (III). That's all important, all right."

Eric III, the younger of the two Bieniemy sons, has cerebral palsy. During an interview in 2020, Bieniemy told me how his son impacted his growth as a coach and leader.

"The first five years of his life, we lived in and out of a hospital," Bieniemy told me in 2020. "He's confined to a wheelchair, but he doesn't ask for any sympathy. Beautiful kid. He's the backbone of our family. He's the energy we feed off of. But what it also allows you is the sense to not take some of the things that we as people take for granted because our son doesn't have blessings like others."

Consider, too, how Mia's role as a caregiver has been essential.Said Reid: "She's a saint. ... One of God's blessings, right there now. Special person.

I spent three days at the Chiefs camp at St. Joseph, over the weekend, and besides the reality that all eyes were fixed on Mahomes as he recovers from knee surgery, no one had a bigger presence on the practice field than Bieniemy.

If you didn't see him – huddling with Reid one minute, chatting with Mahomes a few minutes later – he could surely be heard. His intensity was palatable in moments that begged for some, well, extra volume as coaches are prone to use in pointing out mistakes.

It's no wonder that Mahomes (like Reid and others in the Chiefs organization) are so upbeat about Bieniemy's return and the energy that comes with him – along with his prickly demands for attention to details. He's one of the league's most respected assistant coaches for good reason.

We talked all football on Saturday, given his task to pump life into a Chiefs offense that skipped a few beats during the 6-11 tumble last season and heaped way too much of a load on Mahomes. He talked a lot about fundamentals, consistency and balance.

Of course, he was fired up to reconnect with Mahomes, who is on a fast track to fully recover from the torn ACL and LCL in his left knee suffered in mid-December.

"If there's anybody that's probably been a little more sensitive about his injury, it's probably me," Bieniemy told me. "Because I just want to make sure that he gets to the finish line. But also understanding Pat, Pat is a competitor. ... And the thing I love about him is that he doesn't take anything for granted."

The same can be said for Bieniemy. Especially now, given another dose of real life that puts football in a different perspective.

WNBA POWER RANKINGS, TRADE-DEADLINE EDITION

Teams may take a shot at getting help

Mitchell Northam
USA TODAY

Cameron Brink is averaging 9.1 points for the Sparks in 18 games but has only one start this year. LUIZA MORAES/GETTY IMAGES

The halfway point of the WNBA season is here. The All-Star Game is over and the trade deadline looms at 3 p.m. ET Aug. 2. Teams must now decide if they're going all in for a championship run or hitting the reset button ahead of next season.

Typically, the WNBA doesn't see blockbuster deals at the trade deadline, but there have been a few exceptions. The Connecticut Sun acquired Marina Mabrey from the Chicago Sky at the 2024 deadline before advancing to the semifinals in the playoffs. In 2015, the Minnesota Lynx picked up Sylvia Fowles – also from the Sky – on their way to winning what would be their third of four championships in seven seasons.

Will a league-altering trade be made this season? That remains to be seen, but it's a fun exercise to speculate.

This week's WNBA power rankings are accompanied by trades we think make sense for every team.

1. Minnesota Lynx (22-6)

Previous rank: 1 (–)

Trade target: Sydney Taylor, G, Chicago Sky

If there is an area where the Lynx could use a boost heading into the second half of the season it's guard depth and 3-point shooting. Louisville product Taylor checks both boxes and has proved in her first full WNBA season she's capable of playing in this league. Taylor is averaging 14.2 points per game. But perhaps more important for the Lynx is she is shooting a solid 34% from 3-point land and ranks fifth in the WNBA in 3-pointers made per 40 minutes with 3.9.

2. Golden State Valkyries (19-8)

Previous rank: 2 (–)

Trade target: Aneesah Morrow, F, Connecticut Sun

The Valkyries have no cap space, so they're going to have to give up a bit to make this work, but a player like Morrow is worth it. In her second season in the WNBA on one of the worst teams, the LSU product is averaging 10.5 points and 9.3 rebounds per game. She leads the WNBA in rebounds per 40 minutes (16.4) and rebounding percentage (25.1). A double-double machine, Morrow could do a lot to improve the Valkyries' mediocre rebounding statistics.

3. Dallas Wings (18-9)

Previous rank: 4 (+1)

Trade target: Olivia Nelson-Ododa, F, Connecticut Sun

Alanna Smith has dealt with injuries, making it challenging to live up to her billing as a big offseason free agent signing for Dallas. The Wings could use assistance in areas she was expected to shore up – rebounding and rim-protecting. Nelson-Ododa could be a fix who provides both. She is averaging a career-best 5.7 rebounds per game and last year ranked ninth in the league in blocked shots. She also ranks ninth in the WNBA this season in shooting percentage with a 57.7% clip. What's one more former UConn player on this roster?

4. Las Vegas Aces (18-8)

Previous rank: 3 (-1)

Trade target: Kaitlyn Chen, G, Golden State Valkyries

With Dana Evans battling injuries and the Chennedy Carter experiment flaming out, the Aces could use another playmaking guard off the bench. Chen might fit the bill here. She is playing 14.7 minutes per game for the Valkyries but ranks 10th in the league in field-goal percentage with a 57.5% mark. Her effective field-goal percentage is 62.7%, which is fifth best in the WNBA this season. Chen could provide the punch the Aces need off the bench.

5. Indiana Fever (17-10)

Previous rank: 5 (–)

Trade target: Cameron Brink, C, Los Angeles Sparks

Los Angeles hasn't been the best fit for former Stanford star Brink; perhaps a change of scenery could help. The Fever need depth in the frontcourt as they're not getting much production from Myisha Hines-Allen or Damiris Dantas. Brink could be a pick-and-roll partner for Caitlin Clark or Kelsey Mitchell and rim-run when the Fever run their offense through point-forward Aliyah Boston. This could be fun, but Brink also won't be cheap to acquire.

6. Atlanta Dream (16-10)

Previous rank: 6 (–)

Trade target: Emily Engstler, G/F, Portland Fire

The Dream could use a boost in shot-blocking and 3-pointers. There are not many players in the WNBA who excel at both of those things, but the versatile Engstler is one of them. The Louisville product – who is on her fourth WNBA team in five seasons – is having a bit of a breakout year for the Fire, averaging a career-high 9.2 points per game. She and Aces star A'ja Wilson are the only players in the league this season averaging at least one made 3-pointer and 1.5 blocked shots per game.

7. New York Liberty (15-12)

Previous rank: 7 (–)

Trade target: Aziaha James, G, Dallas Wings

The Liberty rank last in the WNBA in turnovers forced per game and are second-to-last in steals per game. They could also use another playmaking guard off the bench. Enter James, the second-year guard out of NC State who is coming off the bench for the Dallas Wings. Not only has James garnered a reputation as a microwave scorer – she's able to heat up and score in bunches – but she also leads the league in steals per-40 minutes with 3.0.

8. Washington Mystics (14-2)

Previous rank: 8 (–)

Trade target: Betnijah Laney-Hamilton, G/F, New York Liberty

Laney-Hamilton has seen her role reduced under Liberty coach Chris DeMarco and might be more valued by another team that needs a versatile veteran who is a career 80% free-throw shooter. A franchise that could be a fit is the Mystics, who have a young core with aspirations of making the playoffs. Laney-Hamilton could play a variety of positions and should help Washington improve its 73% free-throw shooting, which ranks second-to-last in the league.

9. Portland Fire (11-16)

Previous rank: 9 (–)

Trade targets: Dearica Hamby, F, Los Angeles Sparks

If the Sparks are going to do a fire sale and go into tank mode, the Fire could be a landing spot for Hamby. For starters, they have the cap space to absorb her contract. Second, she fits their style and some of their needs as a versatile player who can rebound, score and defend multiple positions. Hamby is averaging 14.8 points, 7.5 rebounds, 2.4 assists and 1.6 steals per game.

10. Phoenix Mercury (10-18)

Previous rank: 13 (+1)

Trade target: Ezi Magbegor, C, Seattle Storm

Statistically, the Mercury are not very good at defending or rebounding. If she's healthy, someone like Magbegor could help. At her best, the 6-foot-4 center is a player who averages about 13 points, eight rebounds and two blocks per game. She doesn't seem like a long-term fit for the Storm as their future frontcourt seems to be in place with Awa Fam and Dominique Malonga. Magbegor is Seattle's highest-paid player and it would make sense for the Storm to try to move her off their books.

11. Toronto Tempo (10-16)

Previous rank: 10 (-1)

Trade target: Natasha Mack, F, Phoenix Mercury

While the Mercury have struggled, Mack is enjoying her best season as a pro, averaging 9.1 points, 7.9 rebounds and 1.4 blocks per game. She could help the Tempo, who need improved rebounding, better rim protection and a reliable low-post scorer.

12. Los Angeles Sparks (10-16)

Previous rank: 11 (-1)

Trade target: Skylar Diggins, G, Chicago Sky

It's just not working out for Diggins in Chicago. Can she talk the Sky organization into shipping her to Hollywood for a reunion with Nneka Ogwumike (Storm teammates in 2024 and 2025)?

13. Chicago Sky (9-18)

Previous rank: 12 (-1)

Trade target: Kate Martin, G, Los Angeles Sparks

If the Sky are going to continue to have an abysmal season, one way to win over some fans is to bring in one of the most universally liked players in the WNBA who just happens to be from Illinois. Bring Kate Martin back to Big Ten country.

14. Connecticut Sun (7-20)

Previous rank: 14 (–)

Trade target: Zia Cooke, G, Seattle Storm

The Sun's guard play has been a mixed bag this season, and Cooke is having a solid year coming off the bench in Seattle. Could Cooke be even better in a starting role for a team like the Sun? Cooke is averaging 20.1 points per 40 minutes this season.

15. Seattle Storm (6-23)

Previous rank: 15 (–)

Trade target: Saniya Rivers, G, Connecticut Sun

The Storm seem to have an incubator going for raw project players with high ceilings. Rivers has always flashed the potential to be a great player, but she seems to have regressed a bit in her second season with the Sun. A change of scenery could be good for the NC State product.

• **WNBA standings, 2C**

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Max Scherzer returns to mound at 42

Gabe Lacques
USA TODAY

Max Scherzer acknowledges the Nationals Park crowd after getting pulled in the third inning. RAFAEL SUANES/IMAGN IMAGES

WASHINGTON – This time there was little argument when Toronto Blue Jays manager John Schneider came to the mound to take the ball from Max Scherzer.

This time, as Scherzer departed the mound for the dugout and a small but spirited Nationals Park crowd of 17,618 offered a standing ovation, Scherzer didn't stare daggers and skulk into the dugout.

Instead, he turned and wearily offered a wave of his right hand to a crowd that still reveres him for his work in Washington.

On July 27, Scherzer celebrated his 42nd birthday by returning to a major league mound for the first time since June 10 and just the ninth time this season. Back spasms shelved him most recently for six weeks, just one start after he returned from another six-week absence due to right forearm tendinitis and ankle inflammation.

Yet the details are almost irrelevant. Simply, Scherzer is old.

And if the last two seasons have proved anything, it is that any time he can climb a mound in the big leagues, it should not be taken for granted.

Monday, that was the case both for Scherzer and the crowd that saluted him before and after his 2 ⅔-inning, 75-pitch return to the majors.

"That's the best part. That's why I still do this," says Scherzer after he and six relievers combined to suppress the Nationals' league-leading offense in a 3-2 victory.

"No matter what team you're on, where you're at, when you get the ball and you can toe the rubber, there's no other feeling I'd rather have than being on a big-league mound, competing at people."

On this night, he wasn't exactly Mad Max, stalking the mound and talking to himself after pitches.

More like Steamed Scherzer, retaining his energy on a 91-degree evening, a replacement jersey, undershirt and three caps waiting in the tunnel behind the Blue Jays dugout in case he got too sweaty.

But at this age, with his nagging ailments, getting back was most of the battle.

In 2025, Scherzer seemed to dust off every trick in his bag to piece together 17 starts, plus two more in the playoffs, despite a vexing thumb condition and more back issues. And the magic that drove him to two World Series titles, three Cy Young Awards and now more than 3,500 strikeouts seemed to return in Game 4 of the American League championship series, when he screamed at Schneider during a mound conference in the fifth inning, won the fight to stay in the game and delivered a crucial victory.

When the Blue Jays fell two outs shy of winning a World Series, Scherzer was so moved by the experience he returned on a one-year, $3 million contract, smallest of his career. Yet nothing's gone right since: The Blue Jays have been touched by injuries, felled by underperformance from superstar first baseman Vladimir Guerrero and entered Monday, this final week before the MLB trade deadline, 48-58 and 13th among 16 AL teams.

As Scherzer took the mound, it was hard to ignore that his longtime teammate and tepid rival Justin Verlander, 43, announced his retirement at the end of the season. Verlander's body has allowed the 266-game winner just one start this year, and perhaps not another.

The crowd on hand seemed to sense that they shouldn't take Monday's moment lightly.

When Scherzer wandered out to the bullpen for pregame work, a handful of fans by the left-field fence broke into applause that echoed through the nearly empty ballpark. When lineups were announced, he was introduced over the public address system as "starting pitcher and 2019 World Series champion Max Scherzer."

And when Scherzer hopped out of the dugout for the bottom of the first inning, a 75-second standing ovation, unprompted, poured out from the crowd as he began his warm-ups. All that was missing was "Still D.R.E.," his longtime entrance music here.

But Scherzer heard it all and felt he had to respond in kind as he walked to the third-base dugout after he was pulled. "It's good, it's special," he says. "I've got a lot of great memories here in DC. I wanted to show the fans respect, as well, because they were cheering the whole time, even when I was warming up."

What they saw was not the Scherzer of old, nor was that to be expected. Scherzer's first pitch after turning 42 was laced into center field by 23-year-old James Wood. Luis Garcia Jr. followed with another hit, and a walk to CJ Abrams loaded the bases.

Yet there was also this: Scherzer tying up Jose Tena with an 85-mph changeup for a strikeout. Two batters

See SCHERZER, Page 7C

WEATHER

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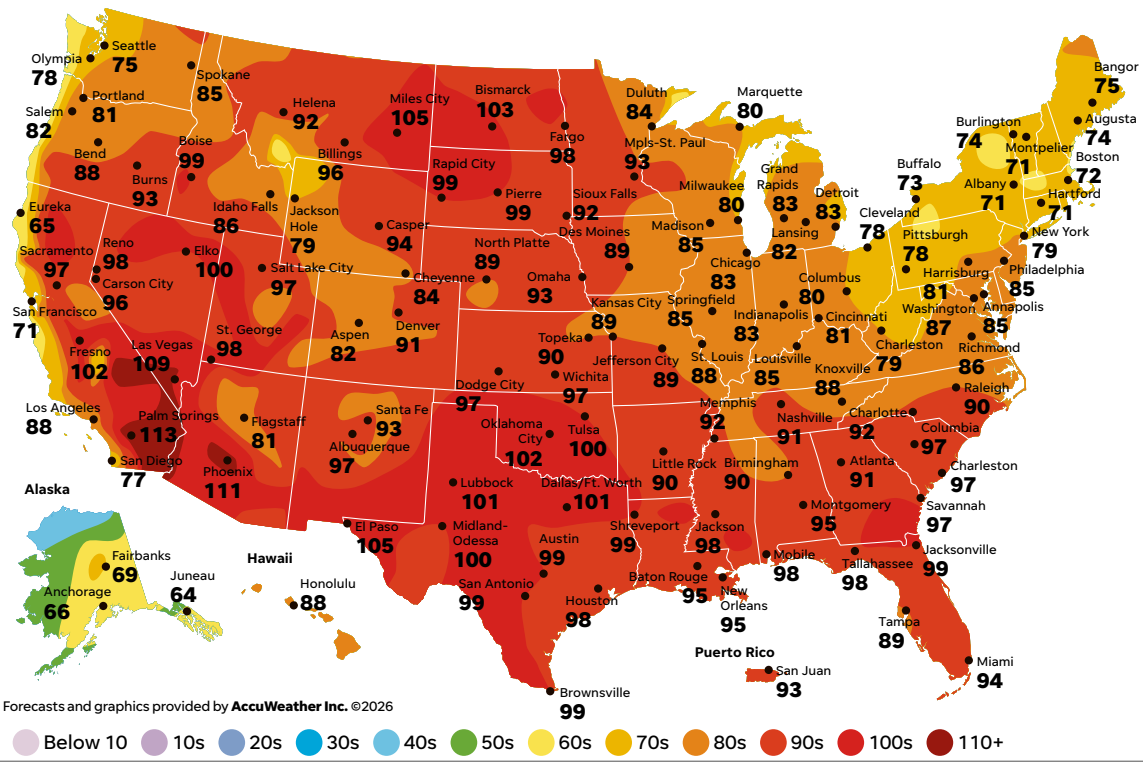
TODAY'S FORECAST

A slow-moving storm will spread locally heavy rain across the **Northeast** today. Flooding will be possible in low-lying and poor drainage areas. Spotty thunderstorms will extend along the rest of the **East Coast** through **Florida**. Afternoon thunderstorms will also rumble across the **Rocky Mountains**; some storms may produce gusty winds and hail.

Outside of these areas, the rest of the **United States** will be dry. A growing heat dome over the central and western portions of the nation will bring temperatures 5-15 degrees above those typical of late July.

From **Nevada** to **Florida**, low temperatures will stay elevated, and some places may set record-high minimum temperatures. Sunshine will be abundant for the **West Coast** and **Great Lakes**.

TODAY'S HIGH TEMPERATURES



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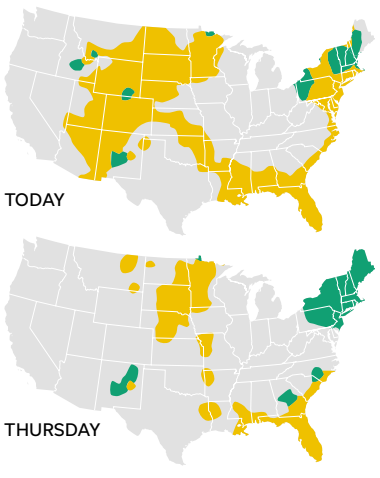

EXTREMES

Note: For contiguous 48 states through Monday

HOTTEST: 119° Death Valley, Calif.

COLDEST: 32° Truckee, Calif.

TOP TRAVEL CITIES Air quality index **(AQI)**

ATLANTA	BALTIMORE	BOSTON	CHARLOTTE	CHICAGO
WED Partly sunny 91/71	WED Stray t-storm 84/68	WED Rain 72/63	WED Mostly sunny 92/66	WED Sunny 83/66
THU Sunny 92/68	THU Partly sunny 84/68	THU A few showers 67/63	THU Sunny 89/68	THU Partly sunny 88/70
FRI Partly sunny 91/70	FRI A few showers 87/67	FRI A stray shower 73/66	FRI Sunny 90/71	FRI Stray t-storm 82/69
AQI Good	**AQI** Good	**AQI** Good	**AQI** Moderate	**AQI** Moderate

DALLAS/FT. WORTH	DENVER	DETROIT	HONOLULU	HOUSTON
WED Hot 101/82	WED Stray t-storm 91/65	WED Breezy 83/59	WED A few showers 88/77	WED Very warm 98/80
THU Hot 102/83	THU Stray t-storm 92/64	THU Sunny 87/65	THU A few showers 90/77	THU Very warm 100/79
FRI Hot 103/83	FRI Stray t-storm 95/62	FRI Stray t-storm 88/67	FRI A few showers 89/78	FRI Hot 100/80
AQI Moderate	**AQI** Moderate	**AQI** Good	**AQI** Good	**AQI** Moderate

LAS VEGAS	LOS ANGELES	MIAMI	MPLS-ST. PAUL	NEW ORLEANS
WED Sunny, hot 109/86	WED Mostly sunny 88/67	WED A.P.M. t-storm 94/79	WED Stray t-storm 93/74	WED Stray t-storm 95/80
THU Hot 112/89	THU Mostly sunny 87/66	THU T-storms 95/80	THU Stray t-storm 91/70	THU Stray t-storm 93/77
FRI Sunny, hot 112/90	FRI Sunny, warm 89/70	FRI T-storms 92/79	FRI T-storms 79/66	FRI Stray t-storm 92/78
AQI Moderate	**AQI** Good	**AQI** Good	**AQI** Moderate	**AQI** Moderate

NEW YORK	ORLANDO	PHILADELPHIA	PHOENIX	SALT LAKE CITY
WED Rain 79/67	WED A.P.M. t-storm 92/78	WED Stray t-storm 85/69	WED Hot 111/93	WED Stray t-storm 97/75
THU Shower 75/68	THU T-storms 86/76	THU Shower 81/68	THU Sunny, hot 115/93	THU Very warm 101/79
FRI Shower 83/69	FRI Heavy t-storms 87/75	FRI A few showers 86/70	FRI Very hot 116/92	FRI Hot 106/76
AQI Moderate	**AQI** Moderate	**AQI** Moderate	**AQI** Moderate	**AQI** Unhealthy s/g

SAN DIEGO	SAN FRANCISCO	SEATTLE	WASHINGTON
WED Partly sunny 77/67	WED Breezy 71/56	WED Clearing 75/53	WED Stray t-storm 87/70
THU Some sun 78/70	THU Breezy 72/57	THU Clouding up 76/56	THU Breezy 85/70
FRI Humid 79/70	FRI Breezy 75/55	FRI Sunny 82/59	FRI Partly sunny 87/70
AQI Moderate	**AQI** Good	**AQI** Good	**AQI** Good

c Cloudy **f** Fog **i** Ice **r** Rain **sf** Snowflurries **sn** Snow **w** Windy **dr** Drizzle **h** Haze **pc** Partly cloudy **s** Sunny **sh** Showers **t** Thunderstorms

U.S. CITIES

	TODAY	THU
Akron, Ohio	76/57c	78/58s
Albany, N.Y.	71/63r	74/63sh
Albuquerque	97/73t	97/74t
Allentown, Pa.	80/67t	77/64pc
Amarillo, Texas	103/74s	101/75pc
Anaheim, Calif.	87/66s	87/66pc
Anchorage, Alaska	66/55s	69/53s
Aspen, Colo.	82/53t	83/54t
Atlantic City, N.J.	85/68t	81/67pc
Augusta, Ga.	99/70pc	94/68s
Austin, Texas	99/77pc	99/75s
Bakersfield, Calif.	101/72s	103/74s
Baton Rouge, La.	95/79t	93/78t
Billings, Mont.	96/68c	98/68s
Birmingham, Ala.	90/71pc	91/67s
Bismarck, N.D.	103/68t	86/64pc
Boise, Idaho	99/68s	100/67h
Buffalo, N.Y.	73/63sh	78/62s
Burlington, Vt.	74/64r	77/62sh
Cedar Rapids, Iowa	85/65s	86/67pc
Charleston, S.C.	97/74t	94/70t
Charleston, W.Va.	79/58pc	81/58pc
Cheyenne, Wyo.	84/63t	89/60pc
Cincinnati	81/61s	83/63s
Cleveland	78/61c	80/59s
Colorado Springs	84/62t	89/65t
Columbia, S.C.	97/72s	93/69s
Columbus, Ohio	80/58pc	83/61s
Corpus Christi, Texas	96/78w	96/78s
Dayton, Ohio	79/59s	82/62s
Daytona Beach, Fla.	96/78t	89/75t
Des Moines, Iowa	89/69s	88/67t
Duluth, Minn.	84/65t	88/65t
Durham, N.C.	89/66s	88/64s
El Paso, Texas	105/80s	106/81pc
Fairbanks, Alaska	69/50pc	68/48c
Flagstaff, Ariz.	81/54t	87/56t
Fargo, N.D.	98/73t	84/65t
Fort Myers, Fla.	89/80t	90/78t
Fort Smith, Ark.	98/80t	93/77t
Fort Wayne, Ind.	81/58s	83/62s
Fresno, Calif.	102/70s	104/72s
Grand Rapids, Mich.	83/59s	86/64s
Green Bay, Wis.	83/63s	88/66pc
Greensboro, N.C.	87/63s	84/64s
Greenville, S.C.	92/66s	89/64s
Harrisburg, Pa.	81/68t	81/66pc
Hartford, Conn.	71/65r	73/63sh
Indianapolis	83/62s	86/66s
Islip, N.Y.	80/68r	76/67sh
Jackson, Miss.	98/76t	94/76t
Jacksonville, Fla.	99/77t	93/77t
Jefferson City, Mo.	89/68s	89/72c
Kansas City	89/69s	81/72t
Key West, Fla.	91/83t	92/84t
Knoxville, Tenn.	88/65pc	85/64s
Laredo, Texas	105/80s	104/79pc
Lexington, Ky.	83/60pc	84/63s
Lincoln, Neb.	91/72pc	84/73t
Little Rock, Ark.	90/76pc	94/75t
Long Beach, Calif.	82/67s	84/69s
Louisville, Ky.	85/65s	87/67s
Lubbock, Texas	101/75s	102/77s
Madison, Wis.	85/64s	88/67pc
Manchester, N.H.	71/63r	70/64sh
Memphis, Tenn.	92/73pc	94/74pc
Milwaukee	80/66s	85/71pc
Mobile, Ala.	98/76t	93/74t
Modesto, Calif.	98/64s	100/64s
Montgomery, Ala.	95/73t	96/69t
Myrtle Beach, S.C.	92/72t	89/70t
Nags Head, N.C.	83/71t	82/71s
Nashville, Tenn.	91/68s	90/68s
Newark, N.J.	79/68r	79/69pc
New Haven, Conn.	76/69r	77/66sh
Norfolk, Va.	86/72t	84/71s
Oakland, Calif.	73/57s	72/55s
Oklahoma City	102/78pc	102/75t
Omaha, Neb.	93/73s	85/72t
Palm Springs, Calif.	113/84s	115/88pc
Pensacola, Fla.	98/78t	91/75t
Pierre, S.D.	99/70t	85/67t
Pittsburgh	78/60sh	80/61s
Portland, Maine	69/60sh	68/63sh
Portland, Ore.	81/57s	81/57pc
Providence, R.I.	72/64r	73/64sh
Raleigh, N.C.	90/66s	87/66s
Rapid City, S.D.	99/67t	87/64pc
Reno, Nev.	98/63s	99/62s
Richmond, Va.	86/68pc	86/68s
Rochester, N.Y.	69/63t	76/62pc
Sacramento, Calif.	97/60s	97/59s
San Antonio	99/78pc	99/78pc
San Jose, Calif.	80/59s	84/57s
Santa Fe, N.M.	93/64t	95/64t
Sarasota, Fla.	89/80t	89/79t
Savannah, Ga.	97/76pc	96/76t
Scottsdale, Ariz.	108/88s	112/90s
Shreveport, La.	99/80t	99/78t
Sioux Falls, S.D.	92/75t	80/68t
South Bend, Ind.	80/59s	85/64s
Spokane, Wash.	85/60s	89/59s
Springfield, Mo.	90/73pc	87/72t
Springfield, Ill.	85/61s	85/65c
St. Louis	88/68s	89/71pc
St. Petersburg, Fla.	89/78t	88/78t
Syracuse, N.Y.	72/63t	75/63sh
Tallahassee, Fla.	98/78t	91/75t
Tampa, Fla.	89/79t	86/79t
Toledo, Ohio	84/58s	85/62s
Topeka, Kan.	90/73pc	84/73t
Tucson, Ariz.	104/84pc	109/85t
Tupelo, Miss.	89/72pc	91/69pc
Tulsa, Okla.	100/80t	96/78t
Virginia Beach, Va.	84/72t	83/72s
Wichita, Kan.	97/77t	100/75t
Wilmington, Del.	85/67t	81/66pc
Winston-Salem, N.C.	87/64s	87/64s
Worcester, Mass.	67/60r	65/62sh

WORLD CITIES

	TODAY	THU
Beijing	95/78t	93/80sh
Buenos Aires	57/51pc	61/57c
Cancun, Mexico	93/78t	94/78t
Dubai, UAE	112/95pc	114/94s
Frankfurt	97/65s	99/66c
Hong Kong	84/80sh	86/79t
Istanbul	87/70s	84/71w
Jerusalem	89/70s	92/72s
Johannesburg	64/44h	67/38h
London	93/63s	83/57pc
Mexico City	75/57r	77/57sh
Montreal	74/64t	77/63sh
Moscow	65/58sh	72/58t
Mumbai, India	87/81r	85/80r
Paris	102/69s	90/65pc
Rio de Janeiro	88/71s	78/69pc
Rome	95/71s	95/70s
Seoul	90/77pc	90/77c
Singapore	90/79sh	89/80sh
Sydney	65/44w	62/44s
Toronto	79/62sh	81/62s
Tokyo	93/79pc	91/80t

Questions driving the trade deadline

Bob Nightengale
Columnist
USA TODAY

Pitcher Tarik Skubal and what the Tigers plan to do are the biggest pieces of the MLB trade deadline this week. RICK OSENTOSKI/IMAGN IMAGES VIA REUTERS CONNECT

COOPERSTOWN, NY – The mass confusion was supposed to be gone by now.

The decisions to sell, buy or stand pat should have been finalized with everyone having a clear direction.

And yet, with just five shopping days left before the Aug. 3 MLB trade deadline, we have less clarity now than at the All-Star break.

The Miami Marlins produced their greatest June (20-6) in franchise history, lost a franchise-record 12 games in a row, staged a dramatic comeback against the Philadelphia Phillies on July 27, and are smack-dab in the National League wild-card race.

The Boston Red Sox, who had the American League's worst record (32-46) a month ago, were cruising at 55-50, and could be the AL favorites to reach the World Series.

The Seattle Mariners, who looked like they were on the verge of taking off and leaving everyone in the dust in the AL West, suddenly are watching reruns of a living nightmare in what could become the most exasperating season in franchise history.

And there are the Detroit Tigers, who have been putting everyone on hold for weeks but now may be forced to pick up the phone and face reality.

Twenty-four teams were either sitting in first place or within five games of a wild-card berth.

Even the teams that have full intentions to sell, like the Cincinnati Reds and Toronto Blue Jays, realize they're only a five-game winning streak away from believing again.

This is what happens when there are seven NL teams that are no better than three games above .500, or no worse than six games below .500, and all in the race.

The are six teams in the AL that have losing records but are within five games of a playoff berth.

The Chicago White Sox have a losing record (10-11) this month but have not lost any ground in the standings and still lead the AL Central by two games.

Please, make it make sense.

While teams are telling one another they still have no idea what they'll do, and promise to get back to them this weekend, here are the top nine questions entering the final days of the trade deadline.

1. Will the Detroit Tigers trade Tarik Skubal?

The Tigers really don't want to trade him, knowing the anger and frustration it will create among their players and fan base, but the decision really is becoming clear. The Tigers, who just dropped three games in a row to sub-.500 teams, and are now seven games below .500 themselves, have no choice but to trade Skubal.

They will try to sell the trade as building for the future, while still not giving up the present. After all, they did it a couple of years ago when they dumped starter Jack Flaherty to the Dodgers and received shortstop prospect Trey Sweeney and catcher/first baseman Thayron Liranzo. The Tigers still made the postseason, and the Dodgers won the World Series.

Then again, it can backfire, too. Just ask the Milwaukee Brewers, who traded All-Star closer Josh Hader to the San Diego Padres in 2022 for Taylor Rogers, Dinelson Lamet, Robert Gasser and Esteury Ruiz. It ripped the soul out of the Brewers clubhouse, and they never recovered, missing the postseason.

The decision: They trade him, and likely No. 2 starter Casey Mize, too, while trying to convince their fans it's really the right thing to do.

2. Will the San Diego Padres trade All-Star closer Mason Miller?

The Padres are holding onto Miller one day and trading him the next. They plan to trade starter Michael King one day and keep Miller, only to flip-flop the next. No one has any idea what A.J. Preller, president of baseball operations, will do.

The Padres, who bought Juan Soto one trade deadline and dumped him 1½ years later, are in the same predicament. They'd love to keep Miller, who's under control through 2029, but his value is closing out games for a championship contender. This is why the Athletics traded him originally, knowing he'd be rotting in the bullpen if there were no leads to hold down. Now, the Padres have to face reality and ask themselves if they're a legitimate playoff team.

The decision: They decide to keep Miller for now but then trade him during the winter, creating a fierce bidding war. They instead trade setup man Adrian Morejon, who's a free agent after the season.

3. Will the Milwaukee Brewers go for it and land the biggest fish, Tarik Skubal?

The ownership and front office would love to let the fans and clubhouse know that they're all in. They certainly have the prospects, and the financial flexibility to get it done. They also realize that unless they get another prized starter to go along with stud Jacob Misiorowski, they have no real chance to knock off the Dodgers and get to their first World Series since 1982. It will be the same ol' story, get into the playoffs, and bow our early. So will they finally step out of their comfort zone?

The decision: Nope. They simply don't believe that Skubal will be the magic elixir for all of their needs. They still need a power bat. They could use another late-inning reliever. They could use someone to step up and be that solid No. 3 starter. Simply, there's too much risk for the Brewers to take on Skubal when they know they're going to be in the postseason anyway.

4. Will teams act differently at the deadline with the uncertainty of 2027?

General managers will tell you that they're not even thinking about the possibility of a labor lockout, saying it's completely out of their control. They want to win now and will worry about the future later. But their bosses may have more of a desire to remain cautious than trade prospects. If there's a salary cap one day, the young prospects making minimum salary will be more valuable than ever.

The decision: Teams may actually be more aggressive because owners are now telling them to prepare for the possibility of a prolonged work stoppage, even canceling all of next season. If there's not going to a season, why not go for the gusto, knowing you can be the defending champions for two years without playing a game next season?

5. Will the Chicago White Sox go all in?

Can the White Sox lose a record 121 games two years ago, and 102 last season, and really pull this off and be in the postseason?

Sure, the White Sox can do it. The division stinks. If no one wants to take it, why not the White Sox? But they desperately need a veteran starter or two to stick around until October.

Decision: They'd love to be in the playoffs, but no, they are not going to be aggressive. They are not going to trade away top prospects and find themselves in the same situation they were in when they had to start another rebuild in 2022.

If a pitcher with team control like Reid Detmers falls into their laps, sure. If teams are wary about Robbie Ray's $25 million contract, they'll put their chips in. But they are not going to mortgage the future. They're quite content to ride it out, believing this team will be built for sustained success.

6. Will the Mets trade Francisco Lindor?

He makes a ton of money with half of his 10-year, $341 million contract still remaining.

He is having a lousy season, just like the rest of his New York Mets teammates.

When David Stearns, president of baseball operations, reeled off his untouchable players at the trade deadline, he did not include Lindor.

Certainly, he showed off his talent to the rest of the world Monday night July 27 with his two homers, triple and six RBIs.

So why not trade him now, clearing payroll and building for the future?

The decision: The Mets will ultimately trade him, believing it's best for the organization, but just not now. Teams need to get creative with their finances, and besides, if there is a lengthy lockout, teams may be hesitant to take on his massive contract.

7. Will the Yankees be able to fill all of their needs at the deadline?

The New York Yankees have the second-best record in the American League, 60-46, and perhaps the fiercest rotation in the game, but they have holes everywhere.

They have $120 million worth of stars currently sidelined with outfielders Aaron Judge, Giancarlo Stanton and Cody Bellinger on the injured list.

They have the worst-producing catcher in baseball with Austin Wells slashing .165/.267/.277.

They don't have any reliable late-inning relievers.

And, truthfully, they have no idea when or if Judge is even coming back.

The answer: The Yankees don't have enough prospects to fill all of their needs, but they will get a catcher and perhaps another outfielder, too. Yet they won't go too crazy, knowing that if Judge isn't able to make it back in time, the season will be a lost cause anyway.

8. Will the Dodgers really make a bold move for Tarik Skubal?

The Dodgers are making their big second-half moves in the next few days when they activate two-time Cy Young winner Blake Snell, All-Star closer Edwin Díaz and playoff hero Kiké Hernández.

So, they really don't have to have Skubal.

They will still win 100 games and run away with the division and be well-rested for October.

The decision: The Dodgers are so loaded with prized minor league outfielders they could hand them out for Halloween and still be fine.

Yes, they may not need Skubal, they'd love just to keep him away from everyone else.

And once they have him, well, they might as well keep him.

9. Will Philadelphia Phillies boss Dave Dombrowski work his magic and come away with help?

The Phillies have been desperately looking for a right-handed bat. They badly need a veteran setup man. And they certainly could use another starter, going 5-21 in games not started by Cristopher Sánchez, Zack Wheeler, Jesús Luzardo and Aaron Nola.

Certainly, president of baseball operations Dave Dombrowski never has been shy trading away prospects to acquire stars. He did that with Miguel Cabrera when he was with the Tigers. He did that with Chris Sale when he was with the Boston Red Sox. And with age catching up to his stars, will he want to keep his prospects or go for the jugular?

The decision: Dombrowski will go all in and do what it takes no matter how many top prospects are needed. He badly wants another chance to return to the World Series.

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Scherzer

Continued from Page 6C

later, he did the same to 24-year-old Dylan Crews, a couple of pitches after Crews committed an act of violence on Scherzer's once-dominant slider, ripping a ball that drilled Wood in foul territory at third base.

Finally, Scherzer got Daylen Lile to roll softly to first. First inning over. No damage.

And so it went for nearly three innings. Scherzer's old reliables, his 96 mph heat and devastating slider, are certified pre-owned versions nowadays, replaced by touch and feel. Scherzer got four whiffs on the dozen changeups he threw.

And he uncorked a curveball that would make late-career Zack Greinke blush, a 75-mph rainbow that proved wildly effective. The offspeed and breaking shtick limited but did not erase damage: Scherzer needed 50 pitches to get through two innings, gave up an RBI double Garcia ripped off the wall, yet just one run despite yielding four hits and three walks.

His 75th and last pitch of the night came with one out in the bottom of the third, a 73 mph hook to Lile, who ended a 12-pitch battle by flailing at it with a runner on third.

"Just keep executing. Keep executing. Stay in the fight," says Scherzer, recounting the mantra popularized by Nationals manager Dave Martinez during their 2019 World Series run. "Recognize what he's trying to do, what pitch is next, what we need to challenge him with. It eventually became a 3-2 curveball and I was able to execute."

And out came Schneider, satisfied Scherzer gave him eight outs, four by strikeout, and setting the stage for just the Blue Jays' third victory in nine games. This time, the conversation was a little more cordial.

"A lot of pitches in three innings for his first start back," says Schneider. "We've known him long enough to have a good feel for what he's feeling.

"He said, 'Your call.' And I said, 'That was a lot right there.' And he said 'Yeah, your call.' And I said, 'OK, nice job.' "

Better yet, Scherzer said he came out of the start feeling fine and both he and Schneider said he's in line to make his next start, Sunday at Rogers Centre against St. Louis. A day later, an uncertain future begins.

With the Blue Jays nearly out of playoff contention, Scherzer – who has a full no-trade clause – likely won't have the runway to convince a contender he can provide the October magic he sprinkled through Toronto and Texas, Los Angeles and Washington and Detroit.

"Look, our record is our record. It's frustrating as heck that we're in this position," says Scherzer. "You get caught up in the distractions of everything going around us now, that's not the way you play big-league baseball."

As for 2027?

There was very little to suggest Scherzer is ready to toss away his jersey for good. He noted the good fortune of being in a slightly better physical position than Verlander, who finally ran into enough ailments he couldn't dodge.

Monday, Scherzer's wife Erica, their children and many family members were on hand. There was a birthday to be celebrated, and perhaps the relief of a career hanging on, in search of his next most effective pitch to keep getting outs.

"I thought it would be too special," says Scherzer, "to miss out – to pitch on my birthday, to pitch back here."

And for as long as his body will allow him.

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‘Brand New Day’ wipes clean the Spider-Man universe

We ask Spider-Man editor Nick Lowe what this means for MJ and Peter. **Page 2D**

Carrie carves a different path through high-school horrors

Summer H. Howell was unaware of the Stephen King tale before taking the role. **Page 4D**

LIFELINE

VICTOR BOYKO/GETTY IMAGES

THEY SAID WHAT?
THE STARS’ BEST QUOTES

“Happy birthday to our favorite guy. Our number one. The action man who does it all. Holds it down. Makes us laugh. Keeps us safe. Our everyday inspiration,” Rosie Huntington-Whiteley said of Jason Statham, her longtime partner and father of her two children, in honor of his 59th birthday on July 26. The model, who has been with the actor for nearly two decades and engaged to him since 2016, shared a series of photos on Instagram of the pair and their young kids, Jack and Isabella, lounging on a yacht. “We love you with all our hearts. Forever and always,” the 39-year-old added.

IT’S YOUR BIRTHDAY
WHO’S CELEBRATING TODAY

Actor **Mike Starr** turns 76. Documentary filmmaker **Ken Burns**, 73. TV personality **Tim Gunn**, 73. Vocalist-bassist **Geddy Lee** (Rush), 73. Singer **Patti Scialfa** (E Street Band), 73. Actor **Dean Haglund**, 61. Singer **Martina McBride**, 60. Actor **Ato Essandoh**, 54. Actor **Wil Wheaton**, 54. Actor **Stephen Dorff**, 53. Singer **Wanya Morris** (Boyz II Men), 53. Actor **Josh Radnor**, 52. Musician **Danger Mouse**, 49. Singer-guitarist **Ashley McBryde**, 43. Actor **Cait Fairbanks**, 33.
– USA TODAY Network

HOROSCOPE | SANCTUARY
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Aries (March 21-April 19). You’ve poured your heart and soul into something. Is it time for others to see it?

Taurus (April 20-May 20). Reaching an emotional crescendo in both your private and public lives? Celebrate your growth during today’s Aquarius full moon.

Gemini (May 21-June 21). Get ready for an a-ha moment! You finally see the big picture under today’s Aquarius full moon.

Cancer (June 22-July 22). Questions of trust, value, and exchange come to a head today. Tuning into what and who truly supports you?

Leo (July 23-Aug. 22). Get ready for a relationship revelation! The growth-oriented Aquarius full moon highlights where you and others stand in the future.

Virgo (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). A work project or health routine may reach completion. Feeling it’s the right time to move on?

Libra (Sept.23-Oct. 23). Creative and personal desires reach a turning point! Make room for what you love during the Aquarius full moon.

Scorpio (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Your professional world is ready to expand. What has to end so you can embrace the new possibilities coming in?

Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). A conversation may act as a catalyst today. Is a fresh understanding reshaping your worldview?

Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Personal and shared resources demand attention during today’s Aquarius full moon.

Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Recognizing how much you’ve grown? Personal revelations feel liberating under the Aquarius full moon.

Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20). A chapter is ready to close! What are you ready to release that no longer fits?

STREAMING

Ray Christian takes a break in the desert dust at Burning Man in 2022. PROVIDED BY WARNER BROS. DISCOVERY

Black Burners storm the desert

Kalia Richardson USA TODAY

When Ray Christian added Burning Man to his bucket list, his family and friends didn’t believe him, especially since his wife, Tiffany Christian, had already vetoed his other plans, like Spain’s running of the bulls. ● “I did some research and found out life insurance does not pay if you die while you’re running with the bulls,” Tiffany says in the new HBO Max docuseries, “The Man Will Burn” (streaming now).

So Christian sought out the next daredevil adventure: Burning Man. For the Gulf War veteran from rural North Carolina, Burning Man wasn’t just about spectacle. It was about healing – no matter how challenging it may be.

“I knew it was going to be hard,” Christian, 65, tells USA TODAY. “The physical environment, people, so many people, and so many White people having a good time. That definitely is not my typical environment, not in the least.”

Christian says he’s used to isolation based on where he lives. His family often is the only Black family many of their neighbors have ever known. Living with post-traumatic stress disorder, he decided to travel to Black Rock Desert to face his demons.

What is Burning Man?

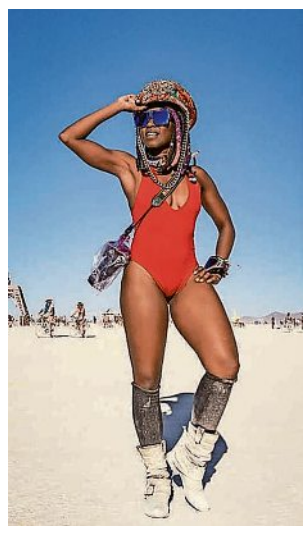
Every year, tens of thousands of people travel to Nevada’s Black Rock Desert to build a temporary city devoted to art, radical self-expression and community. In “The Man Will Burn,” directors Jehane Noujaim and Vikram Gandhi follow an eclectic mix of Burners, from tech billionaires to working-class folks seeking a spiritual – and often literal – high in a city 100 miles north of Reno, Nevada.

The four-part docuseries, whose third part was released July 23, looks at the class divide among playa participants and how the “leave no trace” environmental ethos and communal lifestyle attempt to dissolve cultural and socioeconomic differences.

In 2025, 8.4% of Burning Man attendees identified as Black, according to the Black Rock City census. Although the figure has shown a steady increase over the past decade, White Burners made up 74.7% of attendees. Black Burners attribute low figures to lack of awareness and fear among Black people.

Larry Harvey, the late founder of

See BURN, Page 2D



The Black Burner Project, founded by Erin Douglas in 2017, erected two 30-foot Black portraits at Burning Man in 2022. PHOTOS PROVIDED BY ERIN DOUGLAS; BRIAN KING

STREAMING

Love triangle complicates ‘Canyon’ life

Bryan Alexander
USA TODAY

Warning: this story contains spoilers from Season 2 of “Ransom Canyon,” streaming now on Netflix.

Netflix’s modern Western romance “Ransom Canyon” built its 2025 Season 1 around the slow-burn romance between Quinn O’Grady (Minka Kelly) and Staten Kirkland (Josh Duhamel).

Season 2 (now streaming) expands Ransom Canyon’s first couple, Quinn-Staten, to Quinn-Staten-Oliver.

That’s right, Duhamel, 53, and Kelly, 46, are now part of a central story love triangle with the romantic arrival of Quinn’s cello-playing British boyfriend, Oliver (Ben Robson), to the fictional Texas town.

“The irony is that all the things that Oliver says and does are everything that Quinn wishes that Staten would have said and done,” Kelly tells USA TODAY during a joint interview with Duhamel. “Oliver is everything that she’s ever wanted, but it’s kind of the wrong person.”

Quinn (Minka Kelly) and Oliver (Ben Robson) get close. PROVIDED BY NETFLIX

What happened to Staten and Quinn at the end of Season 1?

Season 1 ended with Quinn leaving Staten and Ransom Canyon for New York City to play piano with the New York Philharmonic, where she met Oliver.

“At the end of Season 1, Quinn’s frustrated with Staten; it’s like enough is enough, and she meets this new guy,” Kelly says. “It’s easy to romanticize the new shiny thing.”

During Quinn’s time away, Staten has his share of short romances while ignoring his NYC love.

“Staten becomes Ransom’s newest bicycle; everyone wants a ride,” Duhamel says. “And he didn’t text. He didn’t go see Quinn. He’s got real feelings for

See CANYON, Page 2D

MOVIES

‘Brand New Day’ shows the love for Spidey

Brian Truitt
USA TODAY

Peter Parker (Tom Holland) tries to make sense of a world that doesn’t remember him in “Spider-Man: Brand New Day.” PROVIDED BY SONY PICTURES

In the Spider-Man mythology, there’s just something special about Peter Parker and MJ.

In comic books since the 1980s and in the 2000s Tobey Maguire movies, “MJ” meant Mary Jane Watson, arguably the teen web-slinger’s greatest love. In the recent Tom Holland Spider-films, the initials are a nickname for Michelle Jones, and like all of the teen hero’s romances, theirs is a little complicated.

“Spider-Man: Brand New Day” (in theaters July 31) catches up with Peter after he makes a tough call: To save the world, he needed to be wiped from the memories of everyone, including his girlfriend, MJ (Zendaya), and best friend, Ned Leeds (Jacob Batalon). The new movie finds Peter coming to grips psychologically with meeting them again for the first time, especially MJ, though a new enemy also emerges to test him as Spider-Man.

Dive into the Spidey’s comic history, and he has gone through all sorts of relationship drama. Marvel fans new and old can now dig into issues on USA TODAY PLAY and see it for themselves, from the old 1960s “Amazing Spider-Man” comic to the new exclusive “Spider-Man TODAY” series. Over the years, there was fellow student Liz Allan, Daily Bugle coworker Betty Brant, and Gwen Stacy, an early love interest infamously killed by the Green Goblin, who has become in later years an iconic superhero herself, Ghost-Spider. Then there’s Mary Jane, who has been Peter’s wife and confidant over several iterations of the Marvel legend.

So, are MJ and Peter forever? It’s “a big question,” says Spider-Man editor Nick Lowe, and he can’t totally get on board with the thought because “that sort of betrays the soap opera brilliance of Spider-Man as a character,” he says.

Lowe does appreciate, however, that they have run with it in the movies. “Tom Holland and Zendaya, you could easily believe they’re in love, right?” he says of the real-life couple. “With the end of that last movie, with the memory wipe, what are they going to do? I’m well-known in the halls of Marvel as one of the biggest pushers of romance. I love kissing in comics, the more of that we can get the better. And so I love that they’re embracing that in the movies as well.”

All of the Spider-Man movies have “their own special flavor, their own special awesomeness,” Lowe adds. Yet he feels that “Brand New Day” “might have dug the most into the comics,” from direct homages to specific covers and panels to a bevy of new movie villains from Spider-Man’s rogues gallery, including Scorpion, Tarantula and Tombstone, one of Lowe’s all-time fave baddies.

When it comes to picking the best movie Spidey, though, Lowe is at a loss. “There’s things I love about each of them,” he says. “Toby Maguire, his nerdiness is just so wonderful and his humanity was incredible. Andrew Garfield, what an actor – tall, lanky, a little cooler than Toby, but such heart. And then you get Tom Holland, who basically is Spider-Man, jumping, leaping everywhere like that. He looks a little bit more youthful, and the heart there is just unbelievable.

“I’ve got three kids – same thing: I can’t really pick a favorite.”

Burn

Continued from Page 1D

Burning Man, had responded to backlash around inclusion, telling The Guardian in 2015, “I don’t think Black folks like to camp as much as White folks.” He added that it’s not the organization’s responsibility to “solve the problem of racial parity.”

As a result, other organizations have skipped Burning Man. Thunderdome Death Guild, known for its fighting cage of consensual violence, chose not to participate in Burning Man in 2021 because it was “lacking in diversity,” according to a statement from their organization.

Burning Man challenges for Black attendees

Burning Man takes place in the Black Rock Desert, a dried-up lake bed made up of chalky, alkaline dust. As thousands descend onto the playa in art cars, bikes and RVs, increased traffic can trigger blinding dust storms.

When Christian arrived at Burning Man in 2022, he christened the experience by rolling in the dust, as featured in the documentary. On his first day in the desert, he had flashbacks of serving in the Gulf War.

“The smell, the sound of it, the feel of it, the heat, the way dust moves, the clanking sounds and the way they sound in a big open space,” Christian says. “It just reminded me of staging for the war and the sounds.”

Patrons also are exposed to high winds and extreme temperatures. In 2023, torrential rain turned the playa into thick mud, leaving many Burners, including Christian, stranded in the desert.

“The heat and the dust can break you,” Christian says. “It’s not like after the festival you’d go back to the hotel room, wash up, get a breath, get that AC and go back out.”

Christian also had unwelcome encounters with some White women, which he says reminded him of experiences he had growing up in the South. In more than one instance, Christian recalled a woman asking him, “Are you looking at us?” or “Are you standing too close?”

“Diva-ish [behavior], like you were staring or ogling them,” Christian says, referring to the microaggressions. “That’s something I hadn’t encountered in decades.”

Erin Douglas, a photographer and founder of the Black Burner Project, also faced an initial hurdle of spreading awareness in the Black community. When she posted photos of her first Burning Man in 2017, she received repeated emails and direct messages from Black people saying “I didn’t know Black people were there” and “I didn’t know if I was allowed.” The following year, Douglas, 43, decided to document the Burning Man experience, calling it the Black Burner Project.

As a frequent attendee, she has learned to pack vinegar in her backpack, along with goggles, a face mask and toilet paper. The desert’s alkaline dust dries out her skin, so she uses a vinegar-and-water-based spray to keep it moisturized and combat the stigma.

“It was my own internal thing that a lot of us probably do carry because historically it means unkempt or ashy, dry,” Douglas tells USA TODAY. “So that was a huge thing for me.”

Improvements for a more welcoming experience

Although other Black attendees have told Douglas stories about the microaggressions and racism they’ve experienced on the playa, she says, a majority of people report positive experiences.

Douglas has provided free tickets to Burners who need financial support and has worked with Burning Man to make tickets more accessible to people of color. (Ticket prices range from $550 to $3,000). She also has curated large-scale art pieces such as two 30-foot Black portraits in 2022 and a model barbershop in 2024, complete with affirmation stations and healing circles for men.

“I call it a Ph.D. in ‘self’ in seven days,” Douglas says. “You get in touch with yourself in a way that most opportunities don’t give you while also being supported and loved on by a community, especially for Black people.”

Daquan Carathers, 41, arrived at the desert city in 2022 after receiving an invitation from his friend Antwon Calderon. Carathers, a cofounder of the Black Flame Collective, recently lost his younger brother and went to Burning Man to get in touch with his emotional side.

“It’s like being at the laundromat for your spirit, you get what I mean?” Carathers says. “What you get to wash, you get to dry, and then you get to fold yourself up and be new again.”

As a cofounder of the Black Flame Collective, Calderon hopes to create a beacon of representation. He credits low attendance to its isolated location in northern Nevada and a lack of know-how among Black people but believes the numbers are growing.

“I would say ultimately it’s a fear of: ‘Is it safe? Is it inclusive? Will it be fun?’ ” Calderon says. “Because it seems like it’s a space only for White people. So why would I go out there?”

For Calderon, who has been attending Burning Man since 2016, all the stereotypes around drugs, sex and partying are true – but he counters that it’s a transformative experience.

He recounts tear-filled moments mourning the loss of his father and other moments centered on community.

“All people, but specifically Black people, don’t have a lot of spaces to be vulnerable,” Calderon says.

“And we show up a lot of ways with masks. We got to talk about where we work, what college we went to, what kind of car we drive. We’re worried about how we’re presenting. But out there, everybody’s dusty, so none of that matters. So what matters is: ‘Who are you?’ ”

Staten (Josh Duhamel) and Quinn (Minka Kelly) have a lot to talk about in “Ransom Canyon.” PROVIDED BY JEFF NEUMANN/NETFLIX

Canyon

Continued from Page 1D

her, but he doesn’t communicate them. So whatever he’s got coming, he deserves.”

Oliver shows up in Ransom Canyon and proposes marriage

Just as Staten works up the guts to open up and show his love to Quinn at her Season 2 welcome home party, Oliver shows up dramatically and proposes by fairy lights in a gazebo. Quinn defers on the proposal but starts seeing Oliver in their new setting, creating the love triangle.

Oliver is modern romance-novel perfect – handsome with devil-may-care hair. He’s understanding even after the proposal rejection, patient, romantic and able to state that British “Love Island” is superior to American “Love Island.”

“Throw in the British accent, and we’re talking. It feels fresh and new,” Kelly says. “But when she’s at home, she realizes that the grass isn’t always greener, even though it’s very pretty.”

Kelly learned TV piano from her musician husband

With all the musical talent in town, piano-playing Quinn decides to start a Ransom Canyon music festival. In real life, Kelly took her onscreen piano-playing skills seriously, getting lessons from her partner, Imagine Dragons lead singer Dan Reynolds, as well as a local piano teacher.

“I don’t know how to read music, but I learned how to play by playing it over and over millions of times until my hands automatically know how to play it,” Kelly says. “Living with a classical pianist at home is very helpful for lessons. It’s my little cheat code. It’s a little cheating that I live with my teacher.”

“That is utilizing the resources you have around you,” Duhamel adds.

Staten has daddy issues, while Duhamel understands ranch work

In Season 2, Quinn has to deal with the arrival of her mother (Patricia Clarkson), who is trying to sell the beloved family home. Staten battles his own father, former Sen. Sam Kirkland (Brett Cullen), who takes control of the family ranch, reigniting a lifelong feud between the stubborn father and son.

Duhamel knows what he’s talking about when Staten launches into a detailed spiel about farming equipment and tractor attachments. After all, the “Las Vegas” star lives on a farm in northern Minnesota with his wife, Audra Mari, where he has embraced the hands-on rural lifestyle.

“I have that equipment at my place in Minnesota, and I’m always dealing with my attachments, whether it’s the grappler or the hedgehog or the bucket,” Duhamel says. “It helps me to wrap my arms around what kind of work this guy does every day.”

How long does the ‘Ransom Canyon’ love triangle last?

All you need to do is go to IMDb to see that Oliver appears in only eight of the 10 episodes. It’s a good run. But there’s no denying Quinn and Staten belong together on “Ransom Canyon” as the couple makes it official.

“It takes as long as it’s supposed to, but when Staten and Quinn do come together, they’ve actually earned it,” Kelly says. “When you have a connection with someone your whole life, it’s really like home is where the heart is. And Staten’s her home.”

The end of Season 2 marks the end of the Sam-and-Diane suspense love angle on “Ransom Canyon.”

“You can only do the will-they-won’t-they for so long,” Duhamel says. “We can all fall in love or lust or pine for someone. But what I find interesting is what it’s like for the everyday domestic minutiae for these two. I love that.”

Fans can hopefully look forward to full coupled-up moments in Season 3. Maybe even the patter of little feet – or at least the discussion.

“I personally would love to see this couple have a baby,” Duhamel says. “I mean, it’s possible.”

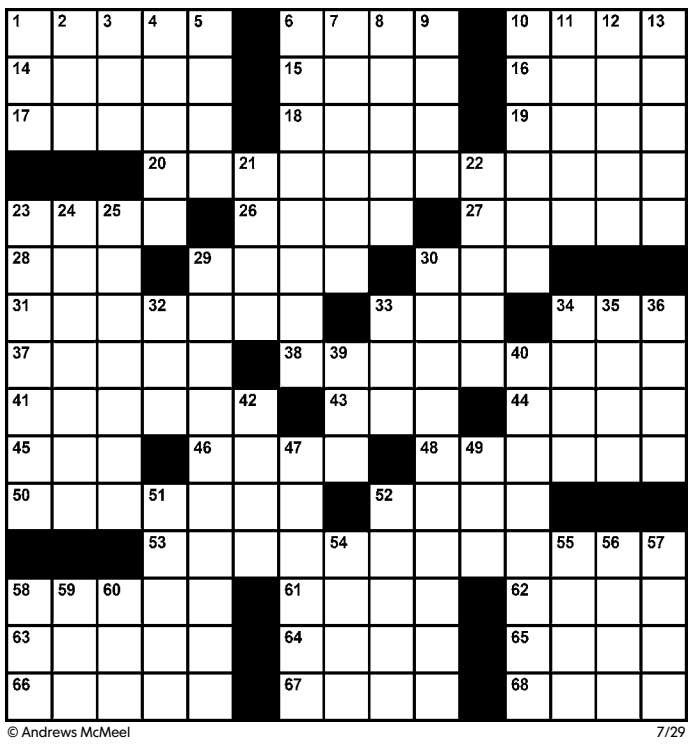
“It’s an exciting idea,” Kelly says. “Or maybe the man wanting a baby, and maybe Quinn doesn’t want to. What does that look like?”

USA TODAY CROSSWORD

EDITED Amanda Rafkin

BY Enrique Henestroza Anguiano

KNIVES OUT



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ACROSS

1 Like a crisp day
6 Covered in grease
10 Leave out
14 "I'm jumping for joy . . ."
15 Hightail it
16 "Pink" in Spanish
17 Hip-hop collective
18 Like 58-Across that have been open for a while
19 Legal rights org.
20 Manhattan neighborhood with a fiery-sounding name
23 iOS assistant
26 Votes in favor
27 Top-tier celebs
28 Exec who oversees DevOps
29 Ice cube container
30 Opposite of SSW
31 Calls it a day . . . or a career
33 Wooden pin
34 Place to get pampered
37 "Nobody can beat me!"
38 Microwaveable turnover that resembles a calzone
41 Monopoly game role
43 Khao Niew cuisine
44 Person who saves the day
45 Fig. on an airport monitor
46 Pay attention to
48 Got really popular really fast
50 Sets of TV episodes
52 Lowest choral voice
53 Sandwich cookie with wafers and a creamy filling
58 Soft drinks
61 Purple berry
62 Cooing bird
63 Tossing and turning, say
64 "Don't use that ___ with me!"
65 Diva's moment
66 Many TikTok posts
67 Concludes
68 Puppy's cry

DOWN

1 Catchy song
2 17th Greek letter
3 "No ___, ands or buts!"
4 Food served with wasabi
5 Midleg joint
6 Like a dog park where pets run free
7 "Tell me about it!"
8 Pipe problems
9 Abominable snowman
10 Prophet
11 Chewy rice cake
12 Dots in the ocean
13 Jeer at
21 Instrument with a distinct U-shape
22 Dance with boleos and ganchos
23 Official copyists
24 Do something repeatedly
25 Circular building
29 Backyard perches that might have "Kids Only!" signs
30 Successful folks who can't claim to be entirely self-made
32 Type
33 K-12 school org.
34 Bias or distort
35 Machu Picchu's country
36 Resting above
39 "Oh, this ___ thing?"
40 Pec-focused gym session
42 Tenant's payment
47 Expansive property
49 "Geaux Tigers!" sch.
51 Cobra or mamba
52 Word before "new" or "loyalty"
54 MBA subject
55 Ripped up
56 Like a stereo-typical villain
57 "You ___ what you sow"
58 "Bust Down" comedian Jay
59 Carry a debt
60 Hydropower structure

Tuesday's Answer

7/28

Answers: Call 1-900-988-8300, 99 cents a minute; or, with a credit card, 1-800-320-4280.

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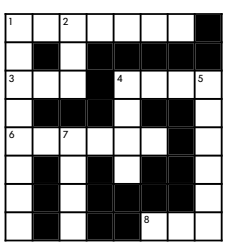
TXTPERT



7/29

Across	Down
1. 6477466	1. 64647837
3. 686	2. 746
4. 6277	4. 6665
6. 747463	5. 722733
8. 463	7. 7483

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Today's theme
Religion

Use the phone keypad to decode the clues. For example: 2 could be A, B or C ... and 5678 could be LOST

7/28

Yesterday's solution

Numbers

More puzzles: **PLAY.usatoday.com**
Want solutions? **answers.usatoday.com**
Feedback: **feedback@usatoday.com**

SUDOKU

Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1 through 9 (no repeats).

4			8		9		2	
	3		2	4		5		
					6			8
		5		9				2
		6		1		9		
9				5		7		
2			9					
		9		2	5		8	
	4		7		3			9

7/29

DIFFICULTY RATING ★★★☆☆

SUDOKU FUSION ON YOUR PHONE
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Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x2 box contains the numbers 1 through 6 (no repeats).

	3	1		2	
		2		6	
		4	5		
		5	2		
	4		1		
	1		6	5	

DIFFICULTY RATING ★★★☆☆

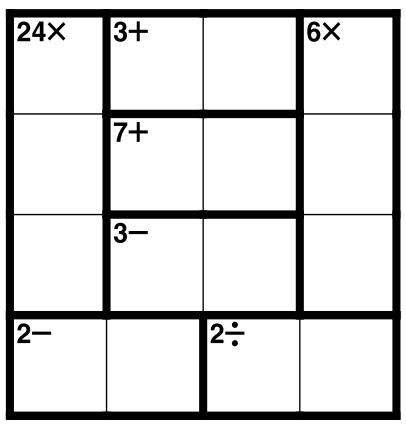
Tuesday's Answers

6	5	4	8	7	3	9	1	2
8	1	7	4	2	9	3	5	6
9	3	2	1	6	5	7	4	8
7	9	3	2	4	1	8	6	5
1	4	8	5	9	6	2	3	7
2	6	5	7	3	8	4	9	1
4	7	9	6	5	2	1	8	3
5	2	1	3	8	4	6	7	9
3	8	6	9	1	7	5	2	4

3	4	2	5	1	6
1	5	6	2	4	3
5	6	3	4	2	1
4	2	1	3	6	5
6	3	4	1	5	2
2	1	5	6	3	4

7/28

KENKEN



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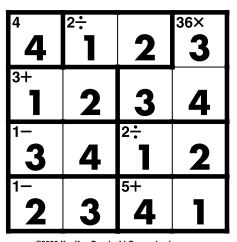
1. Each row and column must contain the numbers 1 through 4 without repeating.

2. The numbers within the heavily outlined boxes, called cages, must combine using the given operation (in any order) to produce the target numbers in the top-left corners.

3. Freebies: fill in single-box cages with the number in the top-left corner.

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION



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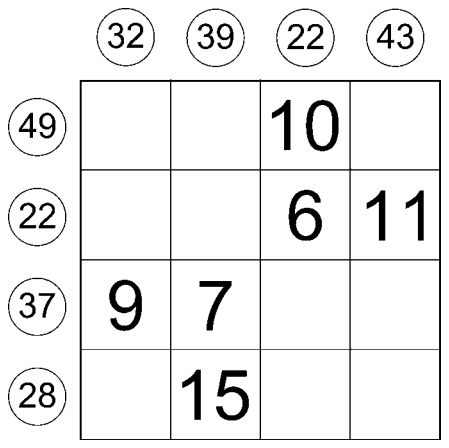
KUBOK 16

By Davide Coppo

Difficulty: **HARD**



Solution to Tuesday's puzzle

5	15	4	3
9	14	2	1
16	12	6	13
7	8	10	11

Enter the missing numbers from 1 to 16 without repetitions so that the sum of the four numbers in each row and column is the same as the corresponding circled number.

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7/29/26

Words

WORD ROUNDUP

By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek 7/29

Find and Circle:

Eight four-letter words ending in CK ☑□□□□□□□
A, B and C in radio lingo □□□
Three branches of the U.S. military □□□
Two neighboring countries □□
Pepsi, but not Sprite □

Tuesday's answer: TOYOTA MAZDA HONDA VOLVO FORD FIAT / MANTLE CRUST CORE / CHAMBER CLIENT FIRM / TENNIS HOCKEY RUGBY / RADISH

T	C	K	M	P	E	R	U	S	A	C	K	
P	A	B	I	A	C	N	B	D	R	Z	L	
G	A	C	R	C	R	H	N	A	E	Q	W	
Y	Y	C	K	A	K	I	A	N	C	C	G	
V	M	H	K	Z	V	C	N	R	E	K	K	
A	R	C	C	W	Z	O	O	E	L	C	W	
N	A	V	A	L	P	H	A	L	S	I	K	
L	R	B	O	L	I	V	I	A	A	Z	E	

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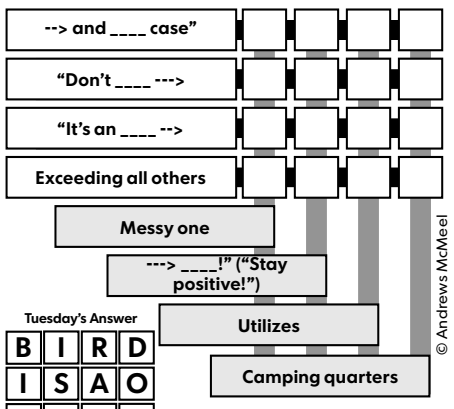
QUICKCROSS

By John Wilmes 7/29



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Tuesday's Answer

B	I	R	D
I	S	A	O
K	I	N	G
E	N	D	S

7/28

QUICKCROSS ON YOUR PHONE
puzzles.usatoday.com

UP & DOWN WORDS

By David L. Hoyt and Russell L. Hoyt 7/29

1. **LOG** _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____ **COACH**

Clues:
1. Lincoln's boyhood home, e.g.
2. Restlessness
3. Peak intensity
4. Contribute
5. Communicating; connected
6. No-tackle gridiron game
7. Tom Landry, for one

Tuesday's Answer

FOLSOM	PRISON
PRISON	BREAK
BREAK	IN
IN	COMMON
COMMON	GROUND
GROUND	SQUIRREL
SQUIRREL	AWAY

PLAY ONLINE PUZZLES.USATODAY.COM

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BONUS CROSSWORD

ACROSS

1 Colorize
5 Gets along
10 Taxis
14 Reputation
15 Sluggish
16 Gothic arch with a point
17 Airborne speck
18 — -Dame de Paris
19 Memory alone
20 Cried like a sheep
22 Forest fire fighter
24 Heart
25 Recline
26 Waste time
28 Usual weather
32 "Heartbreak —"
33 Goatee location
34 Unrefined
36 Lennon's widow
37 Leather strip
38 Swellhead's problem
39 Weight unit
40 Stop snoozing
41 Stem
43 Demand
46 Crystal-filled rock
47 Web address
48 Dalai —
49 Zodiac twins
52 Flavoring for liqueurs
56 — fixe
57 Body part
60 Yellowfin
61 Slit in a garment
62 Therefore
63 Actress — Moran
64 Concludes
65 — tots
66 Went on

DOWN

1 Place of burial
2 Graven image
3 Observe
4 Molasses, in England
5 Showy duds
6 Battery terminal
7 No longer working (Abbr.)
8 Blunder
9 British money
10 Part of the eye
11 Eager
12 — noire
13 Prophet
21 Road charge
23 Point a weapon
26 Giving one
27 Make expiation
28 Throttle
29 Wrinkle
30 Tire's rough surface
31 Score in golf
32 Sweltering
33 Burn
35 Pan used in Chinese cooking
37 Darkness at dusk
41 Tractor-trailer
42 Kitchen appliance
44 Calms
45 Coffee vessel
46 Male goose
48 Jouster's weapon
49 Springiness
50 "East of —"
51 Repair
53 Money in Madrid
54 Oklahoma city
55 Scandinavian
58 Grassland
59 Insect

PREVIOUS PUZZLE SOLVED

F	L	A	W	■	■	L	E	A	D	■	C	A	S	H
L	U	N	A	■	C	A	D	R	E	■	A	L	E	E
I	G	O	R	■	A	P	A	R	T	■	R	O	A	R
P	E	N	D	U	L	U	M	■	A	P	P	E	N	D
■	■	■	R	C	M	P	■	M	I	R	E	■	■	■
C	A	R	O	L	■	■	D	E	N	O	T	E	S	■
A	R	U	B	A	■	M	O	D	E	■	■	C	O	B
R	I	S	E	■	T	E	P	I	D	■	S	L	U	E
P	E	T	■	■	A	R	E	A	■	T	E	A	S	E
■	S	Y	N	E	R	G	Y	■	■	O	A	T	E	R
■	■	■	A	R	T	E	■	C	R	A	B	■	■	■
T	U	R	B	A	N	■	S	H	A	D	O	W	E	D
A	R	A	B	■	E	S	T	O	P	■	R	A	T	E
P	A	V	E	■	S	P	U	R	S	■	N	I	N	A
S	L	E	D	■	S	Y	N	E	■	■	E	L	A	N

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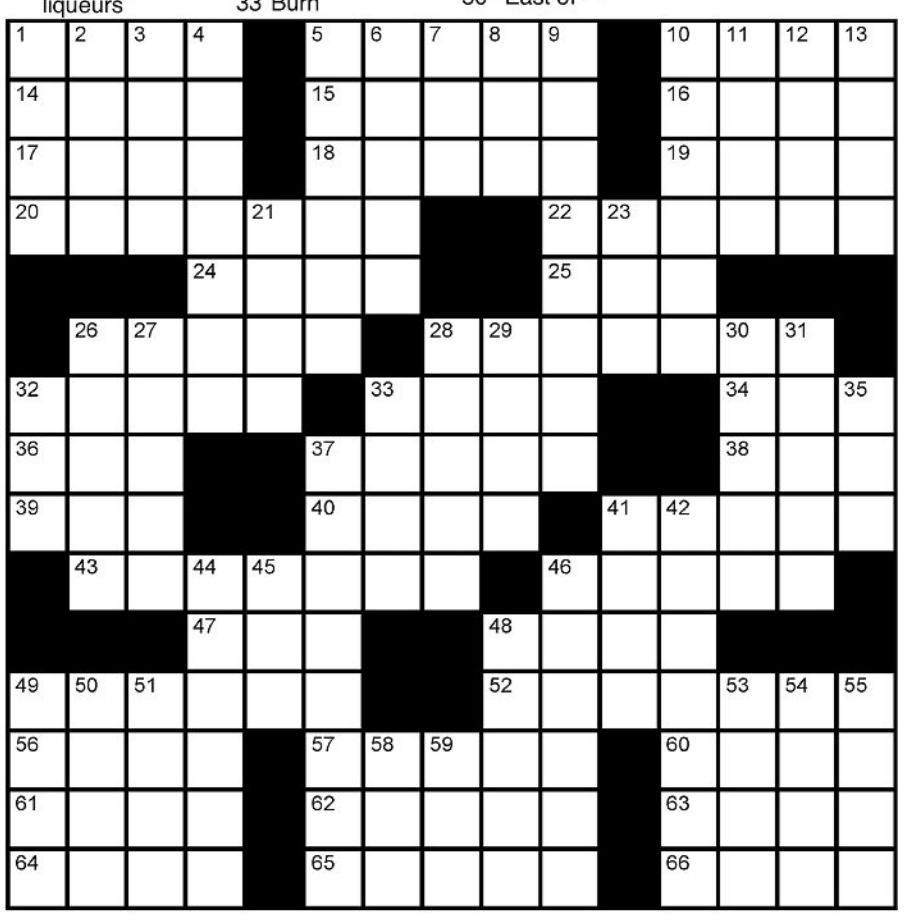

QUICKCROSS

By John Wilmes 7/29

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Tuesday's Answer

B	I	R	D
I	S	A	O
K	I	N	G
E	N	D	S

7/28

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UP & DOWN WORDS

By David L. Hoyt and Russell L. Hoyt 7/29

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5. _____
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GROUND	SQUIRREL
SQUIRREL	AWAY

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DON'T QUOTE ME®

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Irish writer Rebecca West offers this opinion.

Rearrange the words to complete the quote.
CIVILIZATION HATRED NATURAL RESULT WORK

"_____ OF DOMESTIC ___ IS A _____ AND ADMIRABLE _____ OF _____."

7/29

Tuesday's Answer: "The only time to eat diet food is while you're waiting for the steak to cook." - Julia Child

7 LITTLE WORDS

Find the 7 words to match the 7 clues. The numbers in parentheses represent the number of letters in each solution. Each letter combination can be used only once, but all letter combinations will be necessary to complete the puzzle.

CLUES	SOLUTIONS
1 buses and bicycles (8)	_____
2 happening (9)	_____
3 two quarters (4)	_____
4 dried up (8)	_____
5 like a 1970s rug (6)	_____
6 Rolling Stones' Richards (5)	_____
7 haggis accompaniment (7)	_____

RED	ING	CL	VE	OCC
HI	WIT	TUR	HA	SH
URR	AG	HE	ES	KE
GY	PS	ITH	NI	LF

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Tuesday's Answers: 1. KNICKKNACKS 2. LEGENDS 3. HONE 4. BRAIN 5. ARABIC 6. CRAWLED 7. DISBANDED 7/29

JUMBLE®

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME
By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek

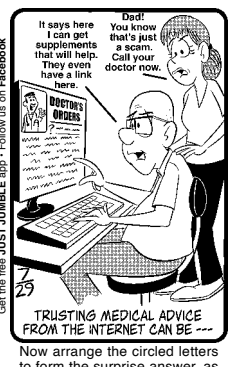
Unscramble these Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

BAEVO

DIHCE

EDIRDL

NAISDL


It says here I can get supplements that will help. They even have a link here.
Dad! You know that's just a scam. Call your doctor now.
DOCTOR'S ORDERS
TRUSTING MEDICAL ADVICE FROM THE INTERNET CAN BE ---

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7/29

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Answer here: ○○○○ - ○○○○○○○○

(Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday's Jumbles: BISON SWEPT DAMAGE GROUND
Answer: One moment the cows were content, then irritable, resulting in — "MOO-ED" SWINGS

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SAN DIEGO COMIC-CON

The new Carrie takes own path to the prom

Brendan Morrow
USA TODAY

SAN DIEGO – Summer H. Howell may not have supernatural abilities like Carrie White, but before she was cast as the iconic Stephen King character, she had a bit of a premonition.

For the 22-year-old actor, landing the lead role in the new "Carrie" television series based on King's classic novel was a long process: Creator Mike Flanagan ("The Haunting of Hill House") notes more than 1,000 actresses were considered. But Howell, sitting alongside Flanagan for a conversation with USA TODAY during San Diego Comic-Con, recalls a moment during her auditioning journey when she began feeling like good news was coming.

Summer H. Howell brought "curiosity and earnestness." PROVIDED BY PRIME VIDEO

"I remember this one week after doing another tape, I was like: 'Something's gonna happen,' " she says. "I started getting déjà vu. I started telling my family and friends, like, 'I don't know. I think they're gonna want to talk to me.' "

Howell was right: She went on to book the part after an hour-long call, in which she had to act out four scenes. Before delivering an emotional monologue, she "was laying on the floor in my room, just telling myself all these affirmations why I deserve this, and I've come so far, and this is meant for me." In a bit of unfortunate timing, though, Flanagan told her the role was hers on April Fools' Day.

"I had no idea what day it was. I had no idea what month it was," he quips.

"Carrie," an upcoming eight-episode streaming series on Prime Video based on King's 1974 novel about a bullied high school girl with telekinetic abilities, has received a number of adaptations over the years, including the seminal 1976 movie starring Sissy Spacek. Given that, many fans have been skeptical another "Carrie" is needed, and Flanagan initially felt the same way. But he came around after realizing that, rather than simply adapt the book again, he could do something completely new with it.

"There are two kinds of adaptation: There's one where you're trying to protect the source material as best you can on its way to the screen, and then the other one is where you take it apart completely and build something new out of its pieces, and that was the reason to do this," he says.

Howell was unaware of "Carrie."
PROVIDED BY ROBERT FALCONER/PRIME VIDEO

"There was absolutely no point in trying to go back and do the kind of adaptation that had already been done and done so iconically and spectacularly. The only thing we could do was try to make something new."

'Our version of Carrie is so different'

In fact, Flanagan cast Howell specifically because "our version of Carrie is so different" than any previous one.

"The Carrie that we were looking for, and the Carrie that Summer was able to embody, was one of curiosity and earnestness and openness and a delicate vulnerability that also hid fathoms of strength," he explains, contrasting this with the "twitching ball of trauma" fans have seen in earlier versions.

That's not to say this was a conscious choice on her part to differentiate herself from Spacek: Howell, who has been acting since age 8 and previously played Alice Pierce in the "Chucky" franchise, wasn't even aware of "Carrie" before the show came along, and she hadn't watched the Spacek movie until after she finished shooting.

Flanagan spoke with Spacek "a few times" during the process and says the star was "very curious about" what he had up his sleeve. "It was really fun watching it go from this kind of protective curiosity into enthusiasm," he says.

Howell hasn't met Spacek yet, but received a "hello through text" from the star of the 1976 film.

Fans should expect "Carrie" to differ from the story they know in a number of other ways. For one, Flanagan says, "one of the biggest early surprises" will be the more nuanced way it depicts Carrie's relationship with her abusive mother, Margaret, played by Samantha Sloyan.

"The dynamic between Margaret and Carrie is different," Howell says. "It's based on love. Margaret is just fearful that her daughter is stepping out into this world that she doesn't know much about either. We've both been secluded for a long time, and we love each other. It's just the circumstances that start to pry us apart."

The iconic 'Carrie' prom scene will be revamped

But the core themes of the book remain in place, and Flanagan sees them as even more relevant in 2026 than ever.

"One of the first images that came to me when contemplating this show is Carrie White walking through a metal detector, going through an active shooter drill," he says. "The events at the prom in Stephen King's mind were a burst of shocking high school violence. We live in a world now where much more explicit high school violence has become completely normalized, especially in the United States."

It wouldn't be "Carrie" without some version of that iconic prom scene, where, in the traditional story, Carrie is drenched in pig's blood as part of a cruel prank. Flanagan says that yes, "we're going to the prom," but it will be "radically different" than fans expect.

"I wanted people to think they knew what happened at the prom and be wrong," he says. "That was something [Stephen King] was excited about, too. We've seen a beautiful version of the prom sequence that he wrote. What can we do that's going to really surprise people? What can we do that's going to really surprise ourselves? What can we do that's going to surprise these characters?

"And so it's one of the great joys of my career to take something that is familiar, and to put a completely different spin on it."

Howell can't say much about how the new prom sequence compares to classic one without spoiling it, though she playfully confirms "there's blood."

She remembers being "very sticky" and having blood painted on her every morning before filming.

"I'd stand in a tent with these goggles on so it didn't get in my eyes. It was very funny looking," she says. "I looked like a Minion."

All eight episodes of "Carrie" debut on Prime Video on Oct. 7.

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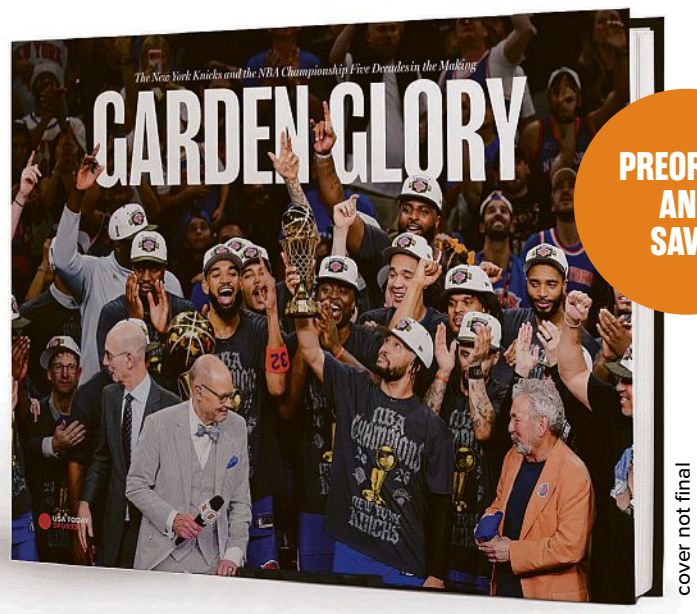

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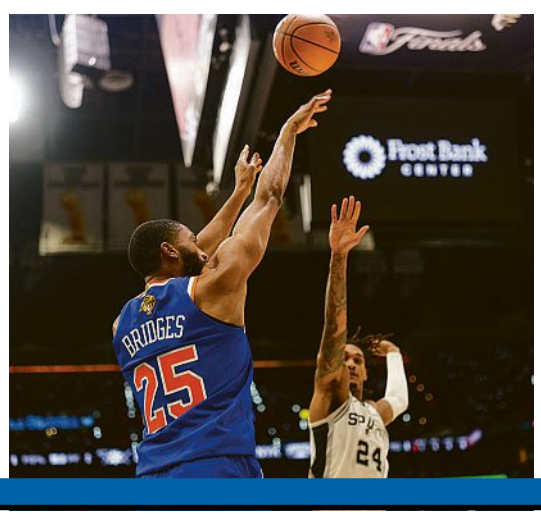
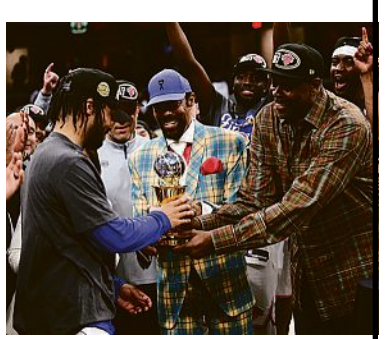




USA TODAY SPORTS

NATION&WORLD EXTRA

Aurora and her 6-year-old daughter were detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement and sent to a family detention center in Texas. Her daughter spent more than half a year in a child migrant shelter before they reunited. CARLOS BARRIA/REUTERS

‘ALL I DO IS WORK’

Thousands of children, sponsors arrested by ICE after tips from U.S. agency

Kristina Cooke
REUTERS

Aurora’s 6-year-old daughter arrived at the U.S. border alone and spent more than half a year in a child migrant shelter while her mother, who was already in the country, worked to get her out.

The two were finally reunited in late March.

“We were overjoyed,” said Aurora, 24, who like others in this story spoke on the condition they be identified only by their first names.

Days later, however, mother and daughter were detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement and sent to a family detention center in Texas, records show.

They are among more than 12,000 people arrested by U.S. immigration authorities following tips from the Office of Refugee Resettlement during President Donald Trump’s second term, according to internal government data reviewed exclusively by Reuters.

ORR was created in 1980 to resettle refugees fleeing war and persecution. Since the early 2000s, the agency has also been charged with housing unaccompanied migrant children arriving at the U.S.-Mexico border, like Aurora’s daughter.

The care of these children has historically been walled off from immigration enforcement. A 2008 law sought to ensure they were placed in the least restrictive setting and released from detention as soon as safely possible, regardless of their sponsors’ legal status.

That meant migrant families could be reunited without fear of being targeted by ICE, even if they were in the country illegally.

See ICE, Page 4NN

Children play amid the ruins in Gaza City on July 27. Gaza remains gripped by daily violence, with Israeli strikes continuing despite a truce that has been in effect since Oct. 10. OMAR AL-QATTAA/ AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Israel’s yellow line, a shifting edge of war pushing Gazans from home

Nidal al-Mughrabi and Ebrahim Hajjaj
REUTERS

On a road in Gaza City’s Zeitoun district, Palestinian resident Assem Dawla loaded mattresses and bags onto a truck as concrete yellow blocks marking the edge of Israel’s expanding military zone stood amid the rubble nearby.

He said it was the seventh or eighth time since the war began that he and his family had been forced to leave a shelter because of Israeli evacuation orders and the advance of what residents call the yellow line.

Zeitoun is one of at least five locations across Gaza where residents and Hamas officials say Israel has expanded areas under its control in recent days by moving forward the yellow line, a military demarcation established under a U.S.-brokered ceasefire reached in October.

As men hoisted belongings onto a waiting truck, elderly relatives picked their way through debris. Continued Israeli military activity made it too dangerous to remain, Dawla said.

“We are taking our belongings out

See GAZA, Page 4NN

Oman presents Iran with Gulf-backed plan for voluntary Hormuz fees

Timour Azhari and Parisa Hafezi
REUTERS

DUBAI — Oman has presented Iran with a plan backed by Gulf states to manage the Strait of Hormuz, including collecting voluntary fees for using it, a Gulf source and a Western diplomat told Reuters on July 28.

The Omani proposals are intended to serve as a basis to end the disruption to trade through the strait caused by the U.S.-Israeli war on Iran.

But a U.S. official on July 28 again rejected the idea of tolls or fees for ships transiting the strait, reiterating that it is an international waterway that should be free of Iranian control or restrictions. The official told Reuters that the deal under discussion would not include any tolls or fees.

President Donald Trump, who abruptly called off a two-week U.S. bombing campaign over the weekend in his latest strategic U-turn, said there were “good talks” under way with Iran but threatened to restart strikes unless negotiations deliver. Iran has denied seeking to resume talks with the United States.

Iran has said it would hold fire as long as Washington does. But U.S. Central Command said on July 28 that Iran had launched multiple ballistic missiles “in an attempted surprise attack on U.S. forces based in the Middle East,” and that the missiles were successfully intercepted

People attend a July 27 vigil for fallen soldier Sgt. Angel S. Rampersad in the Queens Borough of New York City as a resolution to the war with Iran has yet to materialize. ADAM GRAY/REUTERS

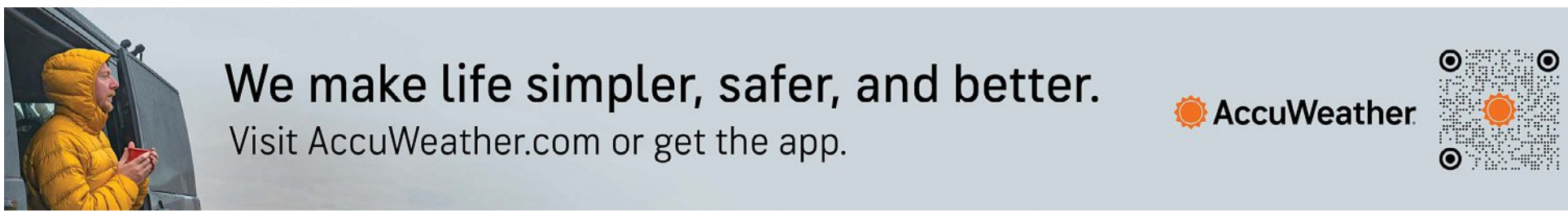
Saudi Arabia said on July 28 that its air defenses intercepted and destroyed several drones targeting oil facilities. The attacks were launched from Iraqi territory by Iran-backed terrorist militias, Saudi Defence Ministry spokesperson Turki al-Maliki said.

Drone attacks were reported in Jordan, Saudi Arabia and northern Iran on July 27, and Jordan reported another drone being downed on July 28.

Washington launched fresh strikes earlier this month to break Iran’s grip on the strait.

Iran effectively shut the strait to ships other than its own after the

See IRAN, Page 4NN

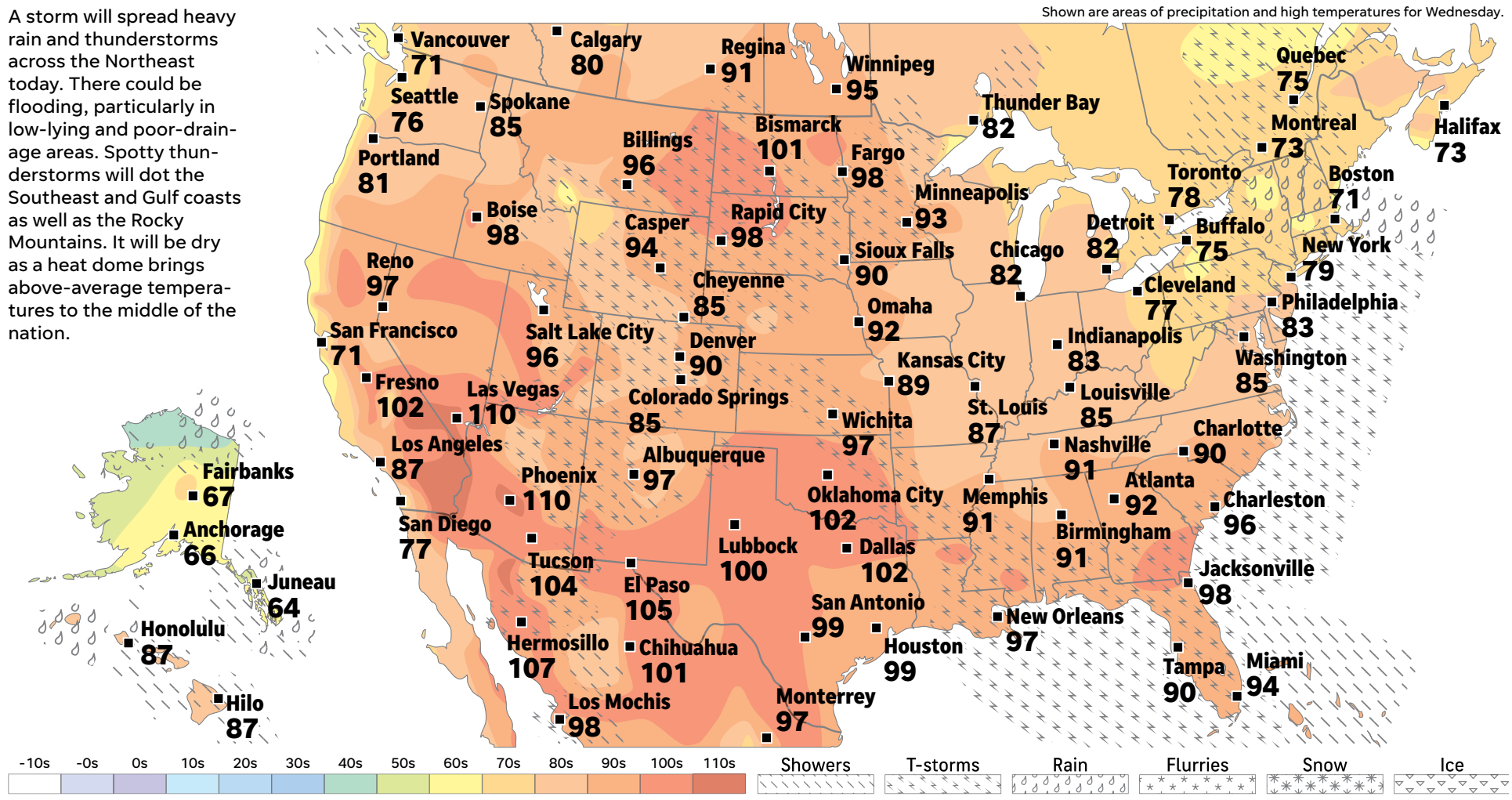


NATIONAL SUMMARY

A storm will spread heavy rain and thunderstorms across the Northeast today. There could be flooding, particularly in low-lying and poor-drainage areas. Spotty thunderstorms will dot the Southeast and Gulf coasts as well as the Rocky Mountains. It will be dry as a heat dome brings above-average temperatures to the middle of the nation.

In the digital e-edition, you can click anywhere on the US map to get up-to-date forecasts, radar, MinuteCast® and more.

Shown are areas of precipitation and high temperatures for Wednesday.



TUESDAY EXTREMES

NATIONAL (for the 48 contiguous states)

High:	**116** at Death Valley, CA
Low:	**34** at Truckee, CA
Precip:	**3.94”** at Bradford, PA

INTERNATIONAL (excludes Antarctica)

High:	**121** at Adrar, Algeria
Low:	**-5** at Balmaceda, Chile
Precip:	**7.28”** at Nagpur Sonegaon, India

TODAY IN HISTORY

July 29 is known for rain in Waynesburg, Pa. By 1990, it had reportedly rained on this date in 92 of the previous 113 years; however, no rain fell from 1987 through 1990.

WEATHER TRIVIA™

Q: Are lightning bolts hotter than the sun’s surface?

A: Yes, approximately five times hotter.

NATIONAL CITIES WEDNESDAY

● Denotes possible travel delays

	High/low/W	Air Quality
Aberdeen, SD	95/72/t	61
Abilene, TX	101/76/s	32
Accomac, VA	84/65/t	35
Adrian, MI	83/57/s	25
Akron, OH	76/56/c	25
Alamogordo, NM	106/76/s	62
Alexandria, VA	87/69/t	55
Alliance, OH	77/56/sh	25
Amarillo, TX	101/74/s	75
Ames, IA	88/65/s	75
Anderson, SC	94/67/s	54
Appleton, WI	85/67/s	25
Asheville, NC	83/60/s	60
Ashland, OH	77/55/pc	25
Athens, GA	94/66/pc	51
Augusta, GA	97/70/pc	54
Austin, TX	100/77/s	75
Bartlesville, OK	98/78/t	60
Battle Creek, MI	81/57/s	25
Bedford, IN	82/61/s	49
● Binghamton, NY	69/61/t	45
● Bluffton, SC	98/78/t	51
Bremerton, WA	76/49/pc	37
● Brockton, MA	72/65/r	25
Brownwood, TX	99/73/pc	35
Burlington, IA	86/65/s	45
Burlington, NC	88/64/s	54
● Burlington, VT	73/64/r	40
Cambridge, OH	80/54/c	32
Camdenton, MO	88/67/s	43
● Canandaigua, NY	68/62/t	45
Canton, OH	77/56/c	25
Carlsbad, NM	102/75/s	62
Chambersburg, PA	82/65/t	50
● Cherry Hill, NJ	83/69/t	55
Cincinnati, OH	81/61/s	55
Clarksville, TN	90/65/s	57
Coldwater, MI	79/55/s	25
Columbus, OH	79/59/pc	43
● Corning, NY	71/61/t	34
Corpus Christi, TX	96/77/pc	75
● Daytona Beach, FL	95/78/t	75
● Deming, NM	103/73/s	59
DeRidder, LA	97/77/s	62
Des Moines, IA	90/69/s	75
Detroit, MI	82/60/s	25
Devils Lake, ND	95/71/s	40
● Dover, NH	71/63/r	25
El Paso, TX	105/79/s	75
● Elmira, NY	71/63/t	28
Erie, PA	78/63/sh	38
Eugene, OR	84/48/pc	25
Evansville, IN	86/63/s	75
● Fall River, MA	72/66/r	25
● Farmington, NM	96/68/t	54
Fayetteville, NC	92/68/pc	60
Fond du Lac, WI	83/62/s	25
Fort Myers, FL	91/79/t	75
Fort Smith, AR	99/79/t	47
● Framingham, MA	71/63/r	25
Freeport, IL	85/61/s	75
Fremont, OH	81/60/s	56
Fort Collins, CO	89/63/t	75
Gadsden, AL	91/67/pc	47
● Gainesville, FL	95/77/t	75
Galesburg, IL	84/62/s	75
Gastonia, NC	91/63/s	60
Glen Rose, TX	101/77/pc	43
● Gonzales, LA	96/78/t	66
Great Falls, MT	92/58/s	129
Green Bay, WI	83/64/s	25
Greenville, SC	91/64/s	54
● Hackensack, NJ	82/67/t	51
Hagerstown, MD	82/64/t	50
● Hattiesburg, MS	99/77/t	38
Henderson, KY	86/63/s	75
Hendersonville, NC	85/62/s	60
● Herkimer, NY	73/60/r	31
Hillsdale, MI	80/55/s	25
Holland, MI	81/61/s	25
● Hornell, NY	69/60/t	30
● Houma, LA	94/78/t	53
Howell, MI	81/57/s	25
● Hutchinson, KS	96/77/t	50
● Hyannis, MA	71/66/r	25
Indianapolis, IN	83/62/s	25
Iowa City, IA	87/66/s	46
● Ithaca, NY	67/61/t	45
● Jackson, MS	98/76/t	37
Jackson, TN	90/66/s	36
Jacksonville, FL	98/76/t	75
Jacksonville, NC	90/70/t	60
Kent, OH	76/56/sh	75
Kewanee, IL	84/62/s	75
Keyser, WV	80/60/c	39
Kinston, NC	90/66/t	60
Knoxville, TN	86/63/pc	58
Lafayette, IN	83/58/s	51
● Lafayette, LA	95/79/t	53
● Lakeland, FL	89/77/t	75
Lansing, MI	82/58/s	25
Las Cruces, NM	102/73/s	87
● Lebanon, PA	82/67/t	52
● Leesburg, FL	90/77/t	75
● Levittown, PA	83/68/t	55
Lincoln, IL	85/60/s	75
Louisville, KY	85/64/s	25
Lubbock, TX	100/75/s	25
Manitowoc, WI	77/63/s	25
Mansfield, OH	76/55/pc	50
Marshall, NC	82/60/pc	60
Marshfield, WI	85/64/s	75
Massillon, OH	78/55/c	25
McLean, VA	85/67/t	55
● Melbourne, FL	92/77/t	75
Memphis, TN	91/73/pc	55
● Middletown, NY	77/63/r	41
● Milford, MA	70/62/r	25
Milwaukee, WI	79/66/s	25
Monroe, MI	83/57/s	25
● Monroe, LA	98/78/t	64
● Montgomery, AL	95/73/t	43
Muncie, IN	80/58/s	42
Murfreesboro, TN	89/64/pc	58
Naples, FL	91/81/t	75
Nashville, TN	91/67/s	58
● Neptune, NJ	83/68/t	70
● New Bedford, MA	72/66/r	25
New Bern, NC	89/68/t	60
New Philadelphia, OH	77/53/c	25
Newark, OH	79/53/pc	43
● Newton, NJ	79/63/t	55
● New York, NY	79/67/t	51
● Norwich, CT	72/65/r	37
● Ocala, FL	93/79/t	75
Oklahoma City, OK	102/76/pc	60
● Opelousas, LA	95/77/t	53
Oshkosh, WI	83/66/s	25
Palm Beach, FL	93/79/t	25
Palm Springs, CA	113/86/s	108
● Panama City, FL	94/80/t	75
Pekin, IL	86/63/s	75
● Pensacola, FL	98/78/t	75
Peoria, IL	85/62/s	75
Petersburg, VA	89/65/pc	53
Phoenix, AZ	110/92/pc	100
Port Huron, MI	77/55/pc	23
● Portsmouth, NH	72/64/r	25
● Poughkeepsie, NY	77/63/r	41
● Providence, RI	72/67/r	50
Pueblo, CO	93/65/t	75
● Quincy, MA	72/64/r	25
Redding, CA	102/67/s	43
Reno, NV	97/61/s	75
Ravenna, OH	77/56/sh	75
Richmond, IN	80/57/s	67
● Rochester, NY	70/64/t	26
Rockford, IL	85/62/s	75
Ruidoso, NM	91/61/pc	50
Salem, OR	82/51/pc	25
● Salina, KS	93/77/t	44
Salinas, CA	70/55/s	25
Salisbury, MD	85/66/t	50
San Angelo, TX	99/73/pc	35
● Sarasota, FL	89/80/t	75
● Savannah, GA	99/75/pc	46
Sheboygan, WI	77/62/s	25
Shelby, NC	90/62/s	60
Sherman, TX	100/79/pc	48
Shreveport, LA	99/78/t	68
● Silver City, NM	96/69/t	57
Sioux Falls, SD	90/72/t	45
Somerset, PA	71/55/sh	40
● Somerville, NJ	84/65/t	55
South Bend, IN	80/60/s	25
Spartanburg, SC	92/65/s	54
Springfield, IL	85/61/s	75
Springfield, MO	92/73/pc	45
● St. Augustine, FL	95/77/t	75
St. Cloud, MN	93/69/t	68
St. George, UT	104/79/t	25
Staunton, VA	83/57/pc	37
Stevens Point, WI	87/64/s	75
Stockton, CA	98/60/s	43
● Stroudsburg, PA	80/63/t	55
Stuart, FL	91/77/t	75
Sturgis, MI	80/56/s	25
● Tallahassee, FL	98/77/t	75
● Thibodaux, LA	95/78/t	53
Topeka, KS	90/74/pc	49
Tuscaloosa, AL	92/72/pc	58
● Utica, NY	72/60/r	22
Ventura, CA	74/62/pc	50
Victorville, CA	102/65/s	108
● Vineland, NJ	84/66/t	60
Visalia, CA	101/64/s	51
Washington, DC	85/70/t	55
Watertown, SD	90/72/t	49
Wausau, WI	86/66/s	75
Waynesboro, PA	82/65/t	50
● White Plains, NY	77/65/r	44
Wichita Falls, TX	103/78/s	50
● Wilmington, DE	83/66/t	50
Wilmington, NC	92/69/t	60
Wisconsin Rapids, WI	88/64/s	75
Wooster, OH	76/54/c	25
● Worcester, MA	68/62/r	25
● York, PA	82/66/c	52

Air Quality Index: 0-50, Good; 51-100, Moderate; 101-150, Unhealthy for sensitive groups; 151-200, Unhealthy; 201-300, Very unhealthy; 301-500, Hazardous

INTERNATIONAL CITIES

	Wednesday High/low/W	Thursday High/low/W
Acapulco	93/76/s	93/78/c
● Addis Ababa	71/55/r	70/55/r
Algiers	91/69/s	92/68/s
Amman	93/72/s	97/74/s
Amsterdam	89/68/s	80/63/pc
Ankara	85/56/s	85/58/s
Asuncion	87/69/t	87/73/s
Athens	95/77/s	92/77/s
Auckland	58/44/pc	61/52/s
Baghdad	116/91/pc	119/90/s
● Bangkok	90/79/r	89/79/r
● Beijing	94/79/t	93/80/sh
Beirut	88/78/s	91/79/s
Belgrade	93/64/s	97/69/s
Berlin	86/62/pc	99/68/s
Bogota	68/51/sh	68/51/r
Brussels	96/65/s	85/62/pc
Bucharest	89/63/s	90/64/s
Budapest	92/65/s	98/66/s
Buenos Aires	58/51/pc	62/58/c
Cairo	100/78/s	101/78/s
Cape Town	69/42/s	71/43/pc
Caracas	90/78/r	91/77/r
Casablanca	88/68/pc	89/72/s
● Colombo	89/81/r	88/79/r
Copenhagen	77/64/pc	81/62/pc
Damascus	103/70/s	105/68/s
Dublin	73/51/sh	68/49/sh
Geneva	96/64/s	99/66/s
Guatemala City	79/64/t	81/64/t
● Hanoi	91/78/t	90/78/r
Harare	73/43/pc	75/42/pc
Havana	92/73/s	93/73/r
Helsinki	70/57/pc	69/63/pc
Hong Kong	84/80/sh	85/80/t
Jakarta	91/77/pc	92/78/sh
Jerusalem	88/70/s	92/72/s
Johannesburg	64/44/pc	67/37/pc
Kabul	93/69/pc	94/69/pc
● Khartoum	101/82/t	101/83/s
Kyiv	74/57/pc	78/61/pc
Kingston	94/82/pc	93/82/s
La Paz	62/27/s	60/30/s
Lagos	82/76/r	84/76/r
Lima	77/69/pc	78/69/pc
Lisbon	85/64/s	83/65/s
London	92/63/s	82/57/pc
Madrid	103/70/s	103/70/s
● Manila	84/77/t	89/78/t
● Mexico City	74/56/r	77/57/sh
Milan	98/75/s	103/75/pc
Mombasa	85/70/sh	85/70/s
Montevideo	57/44/c	62/54/s
● Montreal	73/65/t	77/63/sh
● Moscow	65/59/sh	71/59/t
Nairobi	75/57/c	75/57/c
New Delhi	92/81/r	93/82/r
Panama City	94/76/r	93/77/t
● Paris	100/69/s	90/65/pc
Port-au-Prince	99/78/pc	100/74/t
Rio de Janeiro	87/71/s	78/68/pc
Riyadh	109/83/pc	111/85/s
Rome	95/71/s	94/71/s
San Jose	87/71/r	87/71/r
San Salvador	89/69/r	92/69/s
Santiago	62/43/c	67/47/s
Sao Paulo	83/59/pc	71/60/c
Sarajevo	91/58/s	94/61/s
Shanghai	100/83/s	103/83/s
● Singapore	90/79/sh	89/79/sh
Stockholm	71/58/pc	80/62/c
Sydney	66/45/s	62/45/s
Taipei	98/81/sh	93/79/r
Tegucigalpa	86/67/t	87/67/t
Tehran	98/76/s	96/76/s
Tokyo	93/80/pc	92/80/t
Toronto	78/61/sh	81/62/s
Tunis	92/77/s	93/76/s
Vancouver	71/55/pc	71/58/s
Vienna	94/69/s	98/70/s
Warsaw	78/58/c	90/67/s
Yerevan	91/66/s	89/66/s
Zagreb	95/64/s	98/65/s
Zurich	97/61/s	100/62/s

● Denotes possible travel delays Wednesday

Weather(W): **s**-sunny, **pc**-partly cloudy, **c**-cloudy, **sh**-showers, **t**-thunderstorms, **r**-rain, **sf**-snow flurries, **sn**-snow, **i**-ice.

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EXPLAINER

A look at Oman's plan to manage the Strait of Hormuz

REUTERS

Oman has delivered a proposal to Iran envisaging regional management of the Strait of Hormuz and only voluntary fees for transit rather than Tehran's vision of maintaining control of the waterway and charging for its use.

Control of the strait, the narrow waterway between the Gulf and the Indian Ocean that is the main route for about a fifth of world oil supplies and other vital goods, has been a main sticking point in efforts to resolve the U.S.-Iran war.

A Gulf source and a Western diplomat have told Reuters the proposal was submitted to Iran over the weekend during talks in Tehran.

The proposal is for a joint regional mechanism to manage the strait with voluntary fees to help fund the cost of managing navigation, environmental protection, search and rescue and other services.

Oman's plan is based on the existing arrangements for the Strait of Malacca linking the Indian Ocean to the Pacific, where Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore ask ships to pay a voluntary contribution for services.

Why has Oman proposed a new plan?

Iran closed the strait, running between the Iranian and Omani coasts, as soon as the war began on Feb. 28 with U.S. and Israeli strikes that killed its Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

As the conflict continued, it asserted what it calls a sovereign right to manage the strait and to collect fees for unspecified services alongside Oman.

An interim ceasefire deal that Iran and the United States agreed in June specifically gave Oman a role in determining arrangements for the strait.

That agreement said Iran would conduct a dialogue with Oman to define the future administration and maritime services in the strait, in discussion with other Gulf states and in line with international law.

However, while Oman had held dialogue with Iran on the issue, its only public intervention has been guidance issued in June for vessels transiting the strait through its waters that did not require fees.

What does Iran want?

Iran wants any permanent peace deal in the war to allow Tehran to demand fees for ships passing through the strait.

It has not specified how a fee structure would work, but an Iranian official told Reuters before June's interim truce that it would depend on factors including the type and size of ship, its cargo and other unspecified conditions.

Iran regarded efforts by vessels to transit the strait near the Omani coastline during the ceasefire as a violation of the terms of the truce and fired on them.

It says all ships passing the strait must liaise with a new Persian Gulf Strait Authority that it has set up to administer transit.

Senior Iranian officials say that formalizing its control over the strait is now the most important goal for Tehran in its approach to the conflict.

What does Trump say?

After the ceasefire broke down in July, President Donald Trump said Washington would charge for use of the Strait of Hormuz, seeking 20% of the value of all cargo shipped.

That declaration, made in a social media post, appeared to contradict his own earlier statements that Hormuz transit should be free, as well as those of other senior figures in his administration.

On June 25, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said "no country on Earth has the right to charge for the use of international waterways" and that fees for shipping would never be part of any peace deal.

Trump later said that nobody should charge a fee for using the strait, while adding that he thought it unfair the United States should have to pay for protecting the waterway.

Is it legal to charge fees?

The strait is made up of the territorial waters of Iran and Oman, with the maritime boundary running along the middle.

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea says states bordering straits cannot demand payment simply for permission to pass through.

However, they can impose limited fees for specific services such as piloting, tugging or port services, though these may not be levied more heavily on vessels from any particular countries.

Neither Iran nor the United States is a signatory to the U.N. agreement, but it is widely regarded as international maritime law and Hormuz as an international strait.

In 1968, Iran and Oman agreed on a traffic scheme with the International Maritime Organization under which major vessels would use sea lanes along the middle of the strait. Iranian minelaying during the war has now made such passage unsafe, according to the IMO.

What do other countries do?

No such unilateral move to demand fees to traverse a strait has been made in modern history, shipping industry officials said. Gulf states, whose main access to the high seas for their vital energy exports lies through the strait, are particularly concerned about fees.

The Panama and Suez canals, which have been dug rather than occurring naturally, are treated differently than straits.

The Turkish Straits — the Bosphorus, Sea of Marmara and the Dardanelles between the Black Sea and Mediterranean — are governed by the 1936 Montreux Convention guaranteeing free passage for merchant vessels in peacetime.

That convention allows Turkey to levy standardized charges to cover the cost of services but does not allow it to impose a general transit fee.

Singapore does not charge a fee to transit the Singapore Strait.

MI cyclosporiasis cases increase to 9,680

Siddhi Mahatole and Christy Santhosh
REUTERS

Michigan health officials reported 9,680 cases of cyclosporiasis on July 28, an increase of 427 cases from a day earlier, as the growing intestinal parasitic outbreak keeps U.S. consumers on edge about buying raw produce.

Shoppers have worried for weeks over what products are making people sick with cyclosporiasis, an intestinal disease that can cause explosive diarrhea.

An investigation by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has linked the outbreak to iceberg lettuce served at Taco Bell restaurants sourced from privately held Taylor Farms operations in central Mexico, but authorities are still looking for other potential sources given the size of the outbreak.

Michigan's health department has reported 160 hospitalizations as of July 23, but no deaths. Cyclosporiasis, caused by the cyclospora parasite, can be contracted by consuming food – typically raw fruits and vegetables – or water contaminated with feces. There are currently 4,173 laboratory-confirmed domestic cases of cyclosporiasis in the United States, while the Centers for Disease Control is aware of more than 7,400 additional cases across at least 41 states.

Health officials are still working to determine the cause of the recent outbreak of cyclosporiasis, a disease that can cause explosive diarrhea.
NATHAN HOWARD/REUTERS

Investigators have not determined how many cases are tied to Taylor Farms-supplied iceberg lettuce. The company complained to White House and FDA officials about the government's inspection process earlier in July, a source familiar with the meeting said on July 27.

In a letter to federal health officials, U.S. Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, D-New York, on July 28 questioned whether recent Trump administration cuts to food-safety surveillance and laboratory funding had weakened the government's ability to detect and respond to the nationwide outbreak.

Gillibrand said the cuts had created "dangerous blind spots" in disease surveillance and asked the CDC and the FDA to respond by July 31 on their plans to contain the current outbreak and monitor future ones.

Gillibrand also raised concerns about cuts to FoodNet, a foodborne illness surveillance program run by the CDC, the FDA, U.S. Department of Agriculture and 10 state health departments, which stopped tracking six of eight pathogens, including Cyclospora, in July 2025.

Cyclospora is a nationally notifiable pathogen and most states collect data and share it routinely with the CDC in its disease surveillance system, said Gwen Biggerstaff, deputy director of the CDC's Division of Foodborne, Waterborne and Environmental Diseases, during a recent press briefing.

Former FCC officials oppose early review of Disney-owned ABC licenses

David Shepardson
REUTERS

WASHINGTON — A bipartisan group of former U.S. communications regulators on July 28 urged the Federal Communications Commission to abandon an unusual early review of broadcast licenses held by Disney's eight company-owned ABC television stations, calling the move a threat to free speech.

In a filing with the FCC, former commissioners and senior staff from Republican and Democratic administrations said the review could allow the agency to revoke ABC's licenses years before they are due for renewal and appeared aimed at punishing a broadcaster that President Donald Trump has repeatedly criticized.

The signatories, including former Republican FCC commissioners Mark Fowler, Dennis Patrick, Alfred Sikes and Rachelle Chong and former Democratic Chair Tom Wheeler, said the review was "an assault on free speech disguised as regulatory process."

They said the FCC "appears to envision terminating ABC's licenses years early and making spectrum currently licensed to ABC available to others."

FCC Chair Brendan Carr ordered the reviews in April, even though the stations' license renewals were not scheduled to be considered until starting in October 2028. The FCC had not ordered an early review in more than 50 years before April.

The FCC said the move stemmed from a yearlong investigation into whether Disney's diversity policies amounted to unlawful discrimination, an allegation the company denies. Carr and Disney did not immediately comment.

Broadcast stations need FCC licenses to use public airwaves. While license revocations are exceptionally rare, critics say the prospect of losing a license can pressure broadcasters and raise concerns about government interference in editorial and programming decisions.

Carr opened the investigation in March 2025 into Disney's diversity practices and said Disney submitted documents he viewed as insufficient. He has said he has not ruled out seeking to revoke the company's licenses.

The reviews were ordered in April, a day after Trump urged ABC to fire late-night host Jimmy Kimmel.

"This administration has repeatedly [and unlawfully] said that broadcasters could lose their licenses for continuing to speak in ways the president considers unfavorable," the former FCC officials wrote.

Trump has repeatedly urged broadcasters to drop programs he dislikes or which have been critical, pressing regulators to revoke licenses of broadcasters he says are unfair. Broadcasters have broad First Amendment rights to make content decisions.

Trump demanded in November that the FCC revoke ABC licenses after he criticized an ABC News correspondent for asking Saudi Arabia's crown prince about the 2018 killing of a Washington Post columnist, in a question he dubbed "insubordinate."

The FCC is also investigating the ABC daytime talk show "The View."

FINANCIAL MARKETS

S&P 500 ends higher ahead of tech earnings

Noel Randewich
REUTERS

The S&P 500 ended higher on July 28 as gains in Boeing and Coca-Cola helped offset tumbling chip stocks ahead of quarterly reports from Apple and other tech companies this week.

Global markets have been volatile in July as investors worry that Alphabet, Microsoft, Amazon and other technology heavyweights may be overspending on AI data centers as they race to dominate the emerging technology.

Microsoft rose 1.1% ahead of its report on July 29, while Amazon dipped 0.2% ahead of its results on July 30. Apple climbed almost 1% to $340.08. It hit a session high of $342.89, briefly lifting its stock market value to $5 trillion for the first time. The iPhone maker reports its results on July 30.

Chipmakers that have benefited from heavy AI spending added to recent losses, with the PHLX index losing 4.5%. It has fallen about 25% from its record-high close on June 22, and it remains up 56% in 2026.

The S&P 500 healthcare index jumped 2.4%, the consumer staples index added 2% and the materials index rose 1.7%, while declining chipmakers kept the tech index down 1.4%.

"What has been behind the move into these non-tech names? Part of it is value," said Ross Mayfield, investment strategy analyst at Baird in Louisville. "GDP is solid, the labor market continues to churn along and, in a lot of places, there's evidence that consumer spending is reaccelerating."

Coca-Cola rallied 5% after the beverage company raised its annual revenue and profit forecasts. Boeing jumped 4.8% after the airplane maker generated positive free cash flow as its turnaround plans gained momentum.

The S&P 500 climbed 0.21% to end the session at 7,428.78 points.

The Nasdaq declined 0.22% to 24,876.91 points, while the Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 1.03% to 52,747.32 points.

The Federal Reserve is due to announce its interest-rate decision on July 29. Traders see a 71% probability that the central bank will leave rates unchanged and a 29% chance of a 25-basis-point rate hike, according to CME's FedWatch tool.

Higher rates could further pressure AI companies that are becoming more dependent on debt financing.

Corning tumbled 12% after third-quarter sales forecasts missed estimates, while contract research firm IQVIA Holdings jumped 14% after lifting its annual profit forecast.

Oil prices offered some broader relief, with Brent falling 4.8% to settle at $84.09 a barrel on expectations that tensions in the Middle East and in Ukraine would ease as the White House hosted Israel's Benjamin Netanyahu and Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

Analysts on average expect S&P 500 aggregate second-quarter earnings to jump 39% from a year ago, with AI-related stocks accounting for much of that growth, according to LSEG I/B/E/S.

Advancing issues outnumbered falling ones within the S&P 500 by a 2.5-to-one ratio.

The S&P 500 posted 63 new highs and one new low; the Nasdaq recorded 167 new highs and 207 new lows.

Volume on U.S. exchanges was in line with recent sessions, with 17.2 billion shares traded, compared to an average of 17.4 billion shares over the previous 20 days.

Iran

Continued from Page 1NN

United States and Israel attacked on Feb. 28. A deal in June between the United States and Iran partially reopened it, with future talks planned to resolve larger issues including Iran's nuclear program.

But the agreement collapsed in early July after Iran fired on ships using a channel it does not approve.

Iran has said it wants to manage the strait alongside Oman, which controls the opposite shore, and charge service fees to ships that use it. Washington wants to return to the status quo prior to the war, when ships were able to pass freely with no payments, and says charging mandatory fees would be illegal.

Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi said Tehran had proposed to Oman that Iran manage one-way shipping through its side of the strait and Muscat manage part but not all of the opposite direction.

Under the Omani proposal, Iran would not exercise sole control and fees would be voluntary, the Gulf source and a Western diplomat briefed on the matter told Reuters.

The system would be analogous to one in place on Asia's Strait of Malacca, where Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore ask ships to pay voluntary contributions to fund navigation, environmental protection and search-and-rescue operations.

The Western diplomat compared it to a voluntary carbon tax for flights, where anyone buying a plane ticket can choose to tick a box if they want to pay to offset their emissions.

Gulf Cooperation Council foreign ministers met via video call on July 28 to discuss the latest developments in the conflict, including ways to intensify cooperation on issues related to freedom and safety of vessels through the waterway, a statement from the Qatari Foreign Ministry said.

Iran's joint military command again rejected a plan put forward by Trump for damages to vessels to be paid from frozen Iranian assets, state media reported. It said that any country or company that accepted such payments would be denied passage through the Strait of Hormuz by Iran's armed forces.

Adding to the challenges for shipping in the region, the Iran-aligned Houthis in Yemen opened a new front against the United States and its allies on July 20, when they declared a blockade of Saudi ports on the Red Sea.

Late on July 28, the Houthis said they had fired ballistic missiles at a Saudi oil tanker, which they said was forced to turn back.

Trump called off more airstrikes after receiving advice from military commanders that the strategy had run its course. The 13 nights of renewed U.S. bombing killed scores in Iran and destroyed bridges and tunnels across the south as well as military targets.

Iran responded with attacks on U.S. bases in neighboring countries that killed four service members as well as strikes on civil infrastructure in Gulf states that it said were in response to U.S. strikes on civilian targets.

In an interview with Fox News on July 28 ahead of a meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Washington, Trump said the United States was in a strong position right now. He reiterated he was prepared to strike more Iranian targets but said he would prefer to avoid doing so.

Trump also repeated a threat to potentially target Iran's Pickaxe Mountain, a fortified facility buried deep underground near one of Tehran's main nuclear sites, saying: "If we don't make a deal, we'll take it out very easily."

Iran says it has not sought any new negotiations with the United States, which it accuses of violating the agreement reached last month on a framework for talks to end the war.

Trump met Netanyahu amid strained relations between the two leaders.

Israel was involved in the initial bombing campaign but has not been part of subsequent peace talks.

The end of the U.S. bombing campaign over the weekend sent oil prices tumbling by around 8% on July 27, and the fall continued on July 28.

"If we don't make a deal, we'll take [Iran's Pickaxe Mountain, a fortified facility buried deep underground near one of Tehran's main nuclear sites] out very easily."

President Donald Trump

ICE

Continued from Page 1NN

The Trump administration has taken a drastically different approach. Since January 2025, the data shows, ORR has shared more than 460,000 "leads" with ICE about unaccompanied children, their sponsors – usually parents or other relatives – and additional household members, leaving them vulnerable to detention and deportation.

Interviews with migrant families, legal advocates and current and former U.S. officials illustrate the far-reaching implications of this policy shift and its human toll.

Jen Smyers, who served as deputy director of ORR during the Biden administration, said safeguards against data sharing with ICE have been "completely reversed."

"They are weaponizing a child welfare program for the purposes of more deportations," she said.

In a statement to Reuters, ORR said it "plays no role in the apprehension of children," referring questions about immigration enforcement to the Department of Homeland Security, ICE's parent agency. In response to questions from Reuters, DHS said that during Trump's second term "ORR has provided ICE Homeland Security Investigations with potential investigative leads," as part of an effort to locate unaccompanied children who were placed with "unvetted sponsors," including some with criminal records.

Aurora entered the United States illegally two years ago in search of work and safety.

She left her daughter with family in their rural Mexican village, fearing she was too young for the dangerous desert crossing.

Aurora found a job as a house cleaner in Mississippi. Last August, she said, a relative brought her daughter to the border and left her to surrender to immigration agents, a common strategy among families seeking reunification.

Officials transferred the girl to a migrant children's shelter and Aurora began the vetting process to get her out.

Over the course of six months, she provided the agency with reams of documentation, including a DNA test. She had no criminal record, documents show. Under Trump, the screening process for sponsors now includes a number of extra steps, including requiring fingerprints of all household members. As a consequence, the amount of time unaccompanied children spend in custody has increased from an average of 30 days in fiscal year 2024 to 194 days in June 2026, according to ORR figures.

ORR declined to comment on specific cases but said its increased vetting is meant to shield children from harm.

The time unaccompanied children spend in custody has increased from an average of 30 days in fiscal year 2024 to 194 days in June 2026, according to the Office of Refugee Resettlement. CARLOS BARRIA/REUTERS

The day before being reunited with her daughter, Aurora said, immigration agents visited her at home, asked about the girl, and told her to report to an ICE office the following week.

At that appointment, Aurora recounted, agents "asked me if I had any problems in the U.S. and I said 'no, because I haven't done anything wrong. All I do is work.'"

She and her daughter were detained at the appointment, records show, and sent to a family detention center in Dilley, Texas. They were there for three weeks. Upon their release, Aurora was fitted with an ankle monitor and instructed to report for regular check-ins pending the outcome of her immigration court case, records show. DHS confirmed details of Aurora's detention and release, saying she had admitted to being "illegally smuggled across the border."

While she was inside, her landlord in Mississippi evicted her and threw out her belongings. So mother and daughter headed to California, where a friend offered to put them up. Aurora says she fears they will soon be deported.

At night sometimes, her daughter "gets up and cries, thinking she is still detained," her mother said.

Sponsors swept up

Aurora and her daughter are at least together. Other families have been separated again.

Marleny and her youngest son fled violence in Guatemala in 2023. They crossed the U.S. border illegally and settled in Texas, where she cleaned construction sites.

Her older son, Victor, stayed with family back home. When his uncle was killed, he too decided to make the journey north and turned himself in to U.S. border agents. After four months in ORR custody, Victor was released in late April, the night before his 18th birthday, records show. The family had a party to celebrate.

"I was so happy," Marleny said. "I didn't know then what God had in store for me." To get Victor out, she provided ORR with extensive documentation for both her and her partner, she said, including tax records and fingerprints. Because they had no criminal record – they were "clean clean clean," she said – she had no qualms about sharing the information. Two months after Victor was released, though, ICE agents arrested Marleny and her partner at gunpoint as they were getting in their car to go to work. In response to questions, DHS told Reuters that ICE was executing a criminal search warrant on Marleny's "roommate" — an apparent reference to her partner. DHS did not answer follow-up questions.

Seeing the guns was traumatic, Marleny said, reminding her of the violence she left behind in Guatemala.

A neighbor who witnessed the arrest alerted Victor, who was in the family's apartment with his 6-year-old brother. In tears, he called a legal assistant at the Galveston-Houston Immigrant Representation Project.

"We've seen so many sponsors arrested and collateral arrests with them," said Alexa Sendukas, a managing attorney with the project.

Victor is now caring for his little brother alone. He was due in court after his mother was arrested, but said he forgot to show up in the chaos that followed.

Now facing a deportation order, he hopes to find a lawyer to reopen his immigration case.

"I need to keep moving forward," he said.

Gaza

Continued from Page 1NN

and going to leave the place because the occupation (Israel) has moved the yellow line all the way to Salah al-Din Street," he said.

With the October ceasefire, President Donald Trump set out a peace plan for Gaza that largely halted major fighting after two years of devastating Israeli war in Gaza triggered by Hamas' attack on southern Israel.

The plan called for a surge in humanitarian aid, governance by a civilian Palestinian administration, the disarmament of Hamas, the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza and the deployment of an international force to help maintain security.

But progress has stalled.

Israel effectively controlled an estimated 64% of Gaza by late April. Nearly all of the territory's roughly 2 million residents are concentrated in a narrow coastal area under Hamas control, living largely in damaged buildings or makeshift shelters and facing dire humanitarian conditions.

Hamas has so far refused to disarm, while Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on May 28 that Israel intends to expand the area under its control to 70% of the enclave. Israeli forces have continued near-daily military strikes across Gaza.

Residents in Deir al-Balah, Khan Younis, Gaza City's Zeitoun, Tuffah and Shejaia neighborhoods, as well as northern Rafah, told Reuters that Israeli forces have advanced the yellow block markers during the past 10 days, triggering new waves of displacement in areas already devastated by months of conflict.

At least seven people interviewed by Reuters said residents in some affected areas received warnings via text messages or drone-mounted loudspeakers before leaving once again.

The aftermath of an Israeli air strike on a mosque in Gaza City on July 28, amid a ceasefire that has yet to yield a permanent resolution. DAWOUD ABU ALKAS/REUTERS

The Israeli military said its forces are deployed in Gaza to protect Israel from attack and that the yellow line was being clearly marked on the ground to reduce the risk of contact between troops and civilians.

"IDF's [Israel Defense Forces] defensive posture in the area includes a security zone, a physical barrier, intelligence capabilities, technological means, and operational activity by IDF troops," the military said.

For many Gazans ordered to move, the process has become painfully familiar: gathering whatever survived the previous displacement — a few blankets, a cooking pot, a child's schoolbag — and setting out, often after dark, for another area designated as safe by the Israeli military.

Multiple displacements

Near the shattered remains of buildings in Zeitoun, Dawla's mother, Umm Sami, limped through what was left of the family's property, collecting whatever could still be salvaged.

"Why am I leaving? They [Israeli army] became close, they put the yellow line here. The day before, they struck there, and we left," she said.

Like most of Gaza's population, Dawla's family has been displaced multiple times since the war began, rebuilding temporary shelters only to be ordered to move again days or weeks later.

In a statement issued on July 20, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said an Israeli displacement order in Zeitoun forced 30 families from their tents, which residents said were subsequently destroyed.

As trucks carrying the remnants of household lives rolled away and a child walked past yellow blocks protruding from the wreckage, residents faced yet another uncertain journey.

"The whole war is displacement, displacement. You can't stay anywhere without [Israel] telling you, 'Get out of here, we want to come in,'" Dawla said.